READINGS IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT • NO. 1

TEACHING ADULTS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION

OFFICE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

READINGS IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT • NO. 1

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EACHING ADULTS
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EDUCATION

NDA K. BOCK
iversity of Illinois

FFICE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE
NIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

UTLINE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Teaching adults in continuing higher education programs can be a *rewarding, challenging,* and *satisfying* experience. It can be rewarding to you as a teacher because of the high motivation of your adult students. Challenging, because you may wish to modify your teaching approach and make it more appropriate for adults. And satisfying, because your interaction with mature and experienced adults can be a stimulating experience, leading to growth for you as well as for the students.

Most adults you will interact with do not need to be strongly directed or controlled in their learning experiences. They are self-directed and autonomous. The responsibility .for learning rests with the learners. Your responsibility is to help guide their learning.

Successful teachers of adults understand their subject matter and how it relates to adults; they are accepting, respectful, genuine, and empathic toward others; they understand adults as learners; and they understand useful concepts about teaching adults. *This pamphlet addresses the latter two points. It presents the learning characteristics of adults that set them apart from youth; it treats the question of how adults learn best and then discusses the implications of adult characteristics and learning style for effectively teaching adults.*

OVERVIEW

Adults enter a learning situation with different needs from those of youth. They usually attend adult education activities voluntarily and part-time. Therefore they must coordinate their learning with the many other responsibilities of adulthood, such as those related to job and family.

Adults have many experiences that may be incorporated as a meaningful part of their learning experience, and these life experiences make each person in your class a valuable resource of knowledge.

Adults usually take part in a learning experience by choice and with a definite purpose in mind. Their motivation is strong, and in some cases it must be very strong in order to overcome past negative associations with formal education.

Because the characteristics and needs of adult learners are different from those of youth there must be differences in the teaching and learning environment. The learning setting should be comfortable and should be characterized by trust and respect, helpfulness, freedom of expression, and acceptance of differences. Without a trusting, open atmosphere even the best teaching skills and materials may be ineffective. Effective teachers of adults are respectful of their students, empathic, and genuine.

Because of their strong motivation to learn, adult students should be actively involved in the learning process and, where possible, should set goals for themselves. They should be able to integrate what they are learning with what they already know, using their past experiences to make the learning situation more meaningful: Effective learning situations make use of the experience of the learners.

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULTS

Adults come to a learning experience with general characteristics that have implications for teaching and working with them. The fact is that adults *are* different from youth, and these differences have implications for teaching. Teachers of adults should be aware of characteristics such as these:

1. Adults have had many "life experiences"
2. Adults are highly motivated to learn
3. Adults have had many different roles and responsibilities
4. Some adults lack confidence in their ability to learn
5. Adults are more variable than young people

1. Adults have had many life experiences • They have had more experiences, different kinds of experiences, and differently organized experiences than those of youth, and they wish to relate their past experience to what they are currently learning. Therefore, learning should be centered on experience.

It is important to provide the kinds of learning activities that will help the learners to relate their experiences to the concepts you wish them to learn. This can be done in several ways. Discussion is a very useful teaching method to establish relationships between the past experience of the learner and the concepts you wish to explore. Materials should be applicable to situations or problems with which the learners can identify. Individualization is important because of the variability among adult students. One way to achieve individualization is to allow the learner to select specialized topics of particular interest to him/her. Another way to individualize instruction is to help learners adapt materials for their own use.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING:

- get to know your students and learn about their past experiences
- try to relate the students' experience to your instruction directly or by analogy
- encourage the students to use their experience in attacking learning tasks
- use your students as resource persons whenever possible
- help your students to recognize and respect one another's experience

2. Adults are highly motivated to learn • Motivation is one of the greatest influences on effective learning. The reasons adults participate in adult education activities are usually more complex than those of youth. Adults are motivated to learn because of a concern with upward occupational mobility, and a sense of personal achievement, satisfaction, and self fulfillment.

Most adults are action oriented, and want their learning to have an immediate usefulness to them. They are seeking concepts to help them understand and deal with situations they face in daily life. Their goals are more definite than those of young people and they want to be able to apply what they learn.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING:

- remember the desire on the part of most adults to make direct use of the knowledge they have gained
- class meetings should provide the learners with useable knowledge—where possible, knowledge that can be applied to everyday life

3. Adults have many different roles and responsibilities with competing demands upon their time • Your learners are parents, spouses, workers, citizens, users of leisure time, and children of aged parents. Time that could be spent with family, work, or hobbies is given up in return for study. In most cases, this is done at a high personal cost and commitment.

Most adults have limited time available for study because of these adult responsibilities. A full-time job, plus family and other demands on time and energy, uses up available hours very quickly. It is important to be sensitive and understanding about these competing demands upon your students' time. Sometimes, no matter how hard you try, class attendance will fall off: remember that your students have many other committments in their lives. A change of jobs, especially good or bad weather, illness in the family, many factors such as these may have a marked effect on class attendance.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING:

- identify your students' concerns and goals related to their adult roles, where appropriate

- encourage your students to be involved in the planning of learning goals and activities to match their roles and responsibilities
- select materials oriented to adult roles
- pay careful attention to the advanced scheduling of assignments to aid your students in allocating their time judiciously
- recognize that if your students' needs are not being met, other responsibilities will take higher priority
- recognize that adults may be tired when they come to class—plan a variety of activities to keep them interested and involved

4. Adults may lack confidence in their ability to learn • Some of your students may have been away from formal schooling for many years and may be out of the study habit. Reading may be slower and more difficult for them, study habits may be rusty, and their attention span shorter. If students have been out of school for a time, they come back with questions about their ability to do classwork.

There may be physical factors which accompany the natural aging process, or past negative experiences in school, or perhaps belief in the old stereotype that "old dogs can't learn new tricks" that add to many adults' lack of confidence in their ability to learn.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING:

- it is important for you and your student to know that research shows that, after an initial adjustment period, the abilities of most adults are as great as or greater than those of college students to succeed in a learning situation
- discuss this commonly held fear with your

students early in the program—see how they feel and help alleviate their concerns

- design short-term learning goals with your students where the student has an opportunity for success—early and frequently
- use handouts to reinforce and highlight learning activities—handouts help cut the material down to manageable size
- the learning experience must be satisfying and your student should feel a sense of accomplishment after every class—a person will tend to persist in a task, no matter how difficult, if he/she is getting enough satisfaction from it

5. Adults vary more from each other than young people do • There is a wide range of interests and abilities present in any group of adult learners. It is important to assess individual differences and expect that there will be a wide range of abilities in every class.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING:

- develop individualized means for meeting individual needs where possible, in terms of goals, activities, and materials for each student
- encourage students to recognize and accept individual differences among themselves and others
- use these differences, which represent strengths, by having students share their experiences and serve as resource persons for the rest of the class

I. HOW DO ADULTS LEARN BEST?

. Active participation in setting goals for learning • ıdults learn better when they are actively involved ı the learning process. The more they participate ırough discussion groups and other group techniques, nd the more responsibility they are given for what appens in a learning situation, the more effectively ıey will learn.

: is important to identify the educational needs of ıe learners in the group. Invite learners to discuss ıeir reasons for attending your class in terms of their wn needs, interests, and goals. Consider spending me on exploring and agreeing on learning topics and ctivities that are relevant to the participants. Student ıvolvement contributes to interest, achievement, and pplication.

ecause learning is likely to be more effective if there a similarity between your purposes, as teacher, and ıe goals of the learner, it is important to involve the udents in a mutual process of formulating learning bjectives in which the needs of the students in a mu-ıal process of formulating learning objectives of the udents, of the institution, of the teacher, and of the ıbject matter are taken into account.

tudents should always know why they are learning ıd toward what goal they are aiming. It is important that they understand what steps are necessary to reac a particular learning goal, and in what order the should come. If students become confused abou where they are going, or why they are going there they will lose interest. Sharing in the exploration c options available in the design of the learning exper ence helps the student to become more self-directec

Group discussions are a particularly effective metho of learning, if well conducted. As a teaching methoc discussion is helpful in clarifying ideas, reconstructin ideas based on group experience and knowledge, a riving at a clearer understanding of the topic unde discussion, and planning for action. It is also a parti ularly effective way of incorporating the experienc and knowledge that adults bring with them to th learning experience.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING:

- identify the reasons why your students a attending your activity
- encourage students to work with you in fo mulating objectives
- consider using group discussions to activel involve students in formulating goals for th program

2. Learning should take place in an appropriate cl mate • The climate for learning should be suppo tive, person-centered, and spontaneous. Adult student may respond particularly well to a warm social atmo phere in the classroom. Make sure that you and you students all know each other by name. You may als want to encourage your students to tell somethin about themselves and their backgrounds, although is important to avoid embarrassing those who do nc

ish to talk about this area. An emotional atmosphere f trust and freedom, and an emotional climate withut undue tensions contribute to confidence and seurity. You should provide assurance that learners an contribute freely, that they may differ with each ther and you, and that they are free to suggest new leas. It is important for your students to be able to elate to you in a friendly, personal, and informal nanner. It is also important that everyone feel that ey belong.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING:

- build an educative environment which is respectful of the student
- encourage student participation in decision making
- promote freedom of information and availability of information
- stress mutual responsibility in defining goals for learning
- physical conditions should be comfortable and appropriate for adults
- informality should be encouraged between you and your students
- always answer questions fully and carefully, remembering that there are many levels of ability and background in an adult class

. **Learning should be problem-centered** • It is helpful begin with challenging problems that are real to e learners. Begin with a familiar problem which is hallenging, yet not overwhelming. An early, successl experience will encourage the learner to persist in arning. While adult students will often work very ard on problem-centered activities which seem relent to their individual needs, they may have little patience with busywork—repetitious exercises or homework that is not clearly related to their interests.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING:

- ask learners to identify the problems or decisions in their lives to which they intend to apply what they learn
- select materials that encourage students to relate the content to their concerns
- consider using problem solving methods of instruction, such as case discussions
- keep homework activities centered on the problems the students are solving in class

4. Adults learn most effectively when they set their own pace • An adult should proceed at his own rate of speed, not competing with anyone but himself. Emphasis should be placed on the amount of improvement in relation to the individual's initial proficiency, and not in comparison with the rest of the group.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING:

- allow students to proceed at their own rate
- provide materials and instructions that enable some students to skim and others to review several times
- be alert to adjust the pace of your class to the learners' preferences

5. The learner should receive feedback about progress toward his goals • Adults learn more effectively when they receive feedback regarding how well they are progressing. It is important for the student to have some way of measuring his/her progress, since a sense of achievement is one of the chief motivations for learn-

ing. You can give your students feedback in terms of evaluation of progress toward their goals, their achievments compared with their aspirations. Adult students should be rewarded immediately for success.

THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING:

- use self-assessment forms that enable the students to keep track of their own progress
- encourage the students to clarify their goals and use them to review their progress

III. TO CONCLUDE

Adults come to learning experiences voluntarily, where learning is usually an activity that must be crowded in among many other activities. Adult students bring valuable information to the learning situation and can make valuable contributions. There is usually a wide age span among adult students and a great variety of experiences and backgrounds. The learning responsibility rests with the student—with guidance, encouragement, and assistance from you, the teacher.

If you have knowledge of the adult as a learner, understanding of useful concepts about continuing education, knowledge of your subject matter, and an understanding of the helping behaviors and attitudes necessary for working effectively with adults, you are on your way to the potentially rewarding, challenging, and successful experience of teaching adults.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

Kidd, J. Roby. *How Adults Learn.* New York: Association Press, 1974. (See especially Chapter 2: "The Adult Learner.")

Knowles, M.S. *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species.* Houston: Gulf, 1973.

Knox, Alan B. *Adult Learning and Development.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1977.

Los Angeles City Schools. Division of Career and Continuing Education, *Because They Want to Learn: A Handbook about Adult Learners for New Teachers of Adults,* Los Angeles: Author, 1977.

Miller, Harry L. *Teaching and Learning in Adult Education.* New York: The MacMillan Co., 1964.

The Teacher and the Adult Learner. College of Education, Texas A & M University, College Station, Texas, 1977.

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READINGS IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT • NO. 2

BEFORE YOU PLAN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS: FIND OUT WHAT'S NEEDED

M. DONALD CAMPBELL
University of Illinois

OFFICE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

The purpose of this series is to provide those who work in continuing education a collection of short pamphlets which will contribute to effective planning and operation of continuing education programs. The pamphlet is seen as a guide in that it: (1) identifies issues which the reader may face in working with adult audiences, (2) outlines steps which can be taken to handle those issues, and (3) suggests further literature which might be examined if the reader is interested in additional detail.

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1. DONALD CAMPBELL
Iniversity of Illinois

OFFICE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE
INIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

INTRODUCTION

" Educational programs should be based on the needs of the learners" is a statement made so frequently it has almost become a slogan. The statement does, nonetheless, suggest a simple truth for continuing education. That is, determining the needs of the adult learners is a necessary part of program planning.

The process of determining these needs, though, can be complicated. What are needs? Which needs can be satisfied through educational programs? Whose needs should have priority? What are the best ways to determine needs?

For purposes of this discussion, we'll define a need as a deficiency between the current state and the desired or ideal state. Needs are, however, not necessarily equivalent to the wants or interests expressed by potential participants in an educaional program. What people say they want may not be what they need most. Educational needs are, simply, ones that can be met through educational programs. Other needs might require, for example, new legislation, economic growth, or significant organizational change to be met.

Determining needs (or "needs assessment") consists of gathering information about a potential educational program by analyzing both the requirements of the audience and the cost effectiveness of the program. These activities result in a decision to proceed or not to proceed with planning the program. Thus needs assessment is not an end in itself, but an integral part of program planning. The information gathered can be used, for example, to plan objectives, learning activities, marketing strategies, and evaluation efforts.

Assessing needs is a very important and, at times, a difficult part of program planning. In some cases a planner is tempted to go the easy route and accept what is popularly demanded instead of what is needed. And because assessing needs can be a vexing and time-consuming part of program planning, the planner may prefer to stick to a few familar techniques such as questionnaires and interviews. Yet these techniques may fail to determine what is most needed. To these ends, this pamphlet will describe several methods of collecting data, present a variety of information sources, and outline criteria for their use. It will also present a complete plan of organization--a strategy for analyzing the information gathered and deciding what to do with it.

Our strategy consists of making six basic decisions. These decisions are required no matter what the size or scope of the program. The remainder of the pamphlet will analyze the issues involved in these decisions and suggest appropriate ways of coming to terms with them. Though some variation may occur, we think it best to consider the decisions in the order presented.

DECISIONS TO MAKE WHEN ASSESSING EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

1. **Determine the type of continuing education program.** Different types of educational programs require different need assessment approaches. Needs expressed by potential participants are often sufficient for a program intended for personal enrichment. A program to develop management skills, though, requires information gathered from a variety of sources.

One way to categorize different types of educational programs is as follows:[1]

> **Self-enrichment** programs aim toward personal growth of the participants. Examples include courses in auto mechanics, oil painting, or financial planning that are designed for the adults' personal benefit.
>
> **Career development** programs also aim toward personal growth. They are usually designed, though, to help adults function more effectively in a particular career. Examples are professional development programs and programs that teach various occupational skills.
>
> What we will call **group** programs aim to benefit an organization or a community. What the adult participants learn is for the benefit of some organization or community as a whole rather than for

[1]Monette (1977 article) describes these categories in more detail, using slightly different terms.

themselves as individuals. Examples include educational programs conducted as part of organization development or community development efforts.

The difference between these three categories is not the subject matter of the educational program. Instead the difference is the beneficiary of the program. The same subject matter could be included under any one of these three types of programs. For example, a program on interpersonal communication skills could be designed for adults to use in their own personal lives, or to use as part of their professional responsibilities, or to develop better cooperation within a community. In each case, though, the design of the program would differ.

2. Select the best sources of information. Needs are often assessed by collecting information directly from people who have some connection with the program. However, there are other useful sources of information about educational needs that are often overlooked. These non-personal sources can yield data relatively quickly and inexpensively. They also enable the program planners to gather information without raising the expectations of potential participants.

The nine sources of information, people and other resources, are analyzed in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 describes the primary contributions of the sources. Table 2 presents five criteria to help select which sources to use in which situations.

3. Choose the best methods for collecting data. If information is to be gathered from professional literature, mass media, program descriptions or exist-

TABLE 1: SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS

Sources	Contributions
People	
Potential participants	Insure program is relevant to their needs; can begin to build interest in program.
*Informed individuals	Provide perspective different from potential participants; can help recruit participants for program.
Subject matter specialists	Suggest critical content areas for program.
Previous participants	Provide evaluations of similar programs.
Program planners	Offer insights about successes and failures of programs they have planned.
Other Resources	
Professional literature	Identifies professional trends and controversies.
Mass media	Suggest widespread cultural concerns.
Program descriptions from similar institutions	Offer program ideas that might be adapted for different audiences.
Data from government agencies and other organizations	Suggest needs of communities or organizations.

*For a community educational program these individuals may be bankers, barbers, bartenders, mayors, or clergy.

TABLE 2: CRITERIA FOR SELECTING SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Criteria	Evaluation of Sources
Type of Program	
Self-enrichment	Potential participants and all "non-personal" sources are especially good sources.
Career development	Potential participants can describe what they feel they need to learn. But key individuals have perspective on what participants need for specific job situations.
Group	Perspectives from several groups of people are necessary to determine the needs of a community or organization.
Scope of the Program	
Short, small numbers of participants	A few informed individuals, subject matter specialists, or program planners may be the best approach.
Costly, large numbers of participants	More extensive use of additional sources is necessary.
History of the Program	
Successful program, audience assured	Wide variety of sources may be unnecessary.
Less than successful program	Fresh ideas needed from several different sources.
New program	Potential participants and key individuals are especially important sources.

TABLE 2: CRITERIA FOR SELECTING SOURCES OF INFORMATION (continued)

Criteria	Evaluation of Sources
Intended Audience	
If not predisposed to continuing education programs (e.g., less-educated people)	Variety of sources are important; especially program planners.
If predisposed to continuing education programs	Variety of sources are not as critical.
Resources Available	Number of sources used can be limited by available time, money, and personnel.

ing data, the appropriate data collection methods are quite clear. If information is to be gathered directly from people, though, several methods can be used. Some of these methods are described in the following paragraphs. Table 3 lists their strengths and weaknesses

Methods for Individuals

Questionnaires. Mailing a questionnaire to a sample of potential participants or informed individuals is a very common way to assess educational needs. Respondents are asked, for example, what needs they have, what needs their organization or community has, what educational programs would best meet these needs, what topics these programs should cover, when the programs should occur, and how much participants would pay. To encourage a high rate of return, the questionnaire should include only essential questions. A stamped,

TABLE 3: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Methods	Strengths	Weaknesses
Individual-based		
Questionnaires	Relatively inexpensive to administer.	Frequently used. Many people are reluctant to complete questionnaires because of overuse and their concern with invasion of privacy.
	Data easily analyzed, especially if most questions require short answers.	Impersonal. Some people prefer more personal contact.
	If questions are answered anonymously, respondents can express themselves without fear or embarrassment.	Yield limited information. Respondents cannot be asked to clarify their answers or explain further their ideas.
	Encourage free expression of needs.	Cannot determine if questions were interpreted as intended.
Delphi	Has not been frequently used. People may consider it novel and fun.	Time consuming. Allow about eight weeks if administered by mail.
	A learning experience for respondents. They learn what their colleagues perceive to be educational needs.	Successive dropouts. Each time the questionnaire is administered by mail, some will not return it.
Individual Interviews	Yield more extensive information than questionnaires. Interviewers can ask [illegible]	More expensive to conduct than questionnaires.

	... reluctant to complete a questionnaire may freely share ideas in an interview.	Some individuals may feel inhibited in an interview and may prefer an anonymous questionnaire.
		Data usually more difficult to analyze than questionnaires.
Group-Based		
Group Interviews	Require less time and money than individual interviews.	Data analysis is difficult and time-consuming.
	Group members may stimulate each other to produce better ideas than they would individually.	Group members may inhibit each other, especially when both superiors and subordinates are present.
Brainstorming	Reduces potential inhibition because ideas are first generated and then evaluated.	Although inhibition is reduced, individuals who think quickly and speak freely may dominate those who do not.
	Group members may stimulate each other to produce better ideas than if they worked separately.	May encourage quantity at the expense of quality.
Nominal Group	Promotes a "creative tension," which encourages each person to work hard on the assigned task.	Deliberately excludes those who identify problems or needs from planning the programs.
	Minimizes potential for inhibition in the group.	Complete procedure is very lengthy.
	Allows each person an equal vote.	

self-addressed envelope often is included to encourage return of the questionnaire. Those who have not responded after two or three weeks may be sent a reminder letter.

Delphi. A variation on the questionnaire, this technique was developed during the 1950's by the RAND Corporation to plan national defense strategy. Its name dates back to the Delphic Oracle of Ancient Greece, whose function was to predict the future. The Delphi technique is typically used to obtain consensus about educational needs related to some future situation. It need not be limited, however, to future situations.

The method involves a series of three or four questionnaires. These questionnaires can be mailed or completed in person in a group setting. The first questionnaire is completed, and the data analyzed. A second questionnaire is constructed based on the analysis of these data. Succeeding questionnaires are based on data from the preceding questionnaire.

For example, the first questionnaire might ask pharmacists to list all the educational needs they expect to have in ten years. The second questionnaire might then list the ten needs most frequently mentioned on the first questionnaire. Respondents would rank these ten needs in order of importance. The final questionnaire could list in order the top five needs. It might direct respondents either to concur with this list or explain why additional needs should be included.

Individual Interviews. The same kinds of questions mentioned for questionnaires can also be asked during interviews. These interviews could be brief informal conversations with other program planners. Or they could be more extensive structured interviews with selected potential participants for the program. Sometimes face-to-face interviews are best. Other times telephone interviews can save time and money.

Methods for Groups

Collecting data from a group of individuals can be quicker and cheaper than collecting the same information one person at a time. A group approach also maintains a personal touch, which is absent with questionnaires. Group approaches may, however, yield different information than individual approaches.

Group Interviews. Instead of talking to each person individually, a group of three to six people can be interviewed at the same time. Group interviews are more difficult than individual interviews, because the interviewer must encourage everyone who wants to respond to a question to do so. In most cases the same questions appropriate for individual interviews can be directed to the group.

Brainstorming. Group members first state as many needs or new program ideas as possible within a limited period of time. During the second phase of the procedure they evaluate these needs or ideas and select the most important ones. Brainstorming can be especially appropriate when program planners are at a loss for new program ideas.

Nominal Group. Although gathered as a group, members work individually. They list problems or needs on cards and later share their list one

TABLE 4: CRITERIA FOR SELECTING DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Criteria	Evaluation of Methods
*Type of Program	
Self-enrichment	Individual-based; unless group needed to reduce costs.
Career development	Individual-based for participants; group-based useful for people at level participant wants to reach.
Group	Group-based helps determine how individual units currently function together; may be supplemented by individual-based.
Scope of Needs Assessment	
Extensive	May require more than one method (e.g., group interviews with a few people, followed by questionnaires to larger numbers).
Informal	Limited use of one method may be appropriate (e.g., a few individual interviews).
Characteristics of People from Whom Data are Gathered	
Limited educational background	Individual or group interviews may be best; no questionnaires.
Busy professional people	Telephone interviews best.
Group living or working within close distance	Group-based may work.
Group separated by distance	Telephone interviews, questionnaires may be best.

*The beneficiary of the program helps to determine whether individual-based or group-based methods are appropriate.

item at a time with the group. Each item on their list becomes part of a group list, except if already mentioned by someone else. Group members then rank in order of importance the problems or needs on the group list for use in later program planning stages.

The nominal group technique was originally designed for business organizations. The complete procedure consists of five stages. Succeeding stages include increasingly higher levels of authority within the organization. Lower-level workers identify the problems, but upper-management personnel decide what programs to conduct and what resources to allocate.

The data collection methods described in this pamphlet do not exhaust the list of possibilities. Advisory groups or planning committees can also determine needs. These groups are the subject of another pamphlet in this series. For descriptions of other methods consult the "Suggestions for Further Reading" at the end of this pamphlet.

From this variety of data collection methods those selected must be appropriate to the situation. Table 4 presents three criteria to help select data collection methods.

The last three decisions require less explanation, but they are no less important.

4. Plan how to use the information collected. A frequent problem is collecting more information than is necessary. Planning in advance how the data will be used can help avoid this problem. Basically the data have two purposes:

- to determine whether to proceed to plan a particular education program, and
- if planning proceeds, to help determine what content, format(s) and resource person(s) should be included.

A two-phase data collection strategy can sometimes help avoid gathering too much information. First information could be collected, for example, from other program planners or governmental data to determine if a particular program is feasible. Then, additional prodedures can be used to obtain information from other sources about the appropriate content, format and resource person(s).

5. **Determine the best methods for data analysis.** These methods should be consistent with the scope of the needs assessment. An extensive needs assessment may call for a structured interview schedule and a sophisticated statistical analysis. For an informal needs assessment an interview schedule may be unnecessary. The data analysis may consist of noting the major themes that emerge from a few telephone conversations.

This decision may seem easy. Problems can occur, however, if the data reveal conflicting ideas about educational needs. The potential participants for a program may identify one set of needs, but other informed individuals may identify an entirely different set. Personal values can strongly influence the way these conflicts are resolved.[2] Program planners who admire people in power often give priority to needs identified by informed individuals. Planners who identify

[2]See the Monette articles ("Suggestions for Further Reading") for the importance of values in assessing needs.

with people at the "grass roots" often respond more favorably to the needs they express.

Reflecting on the type of program anticipated can help counteract value biases. Needs expressed by potential participants should receive priority for a self-enrichment program. For a career development program needs identified by key individuals may be most important. A group program, which aims to benefit an organization or community, can present a dilemma. Informed influential people in the organization or community may have the best overall perspective of what the group needs. This view, however, may not accurately reflect the reality experienced by less influential people. The best approach for this type of program is to integrate both points of view in some way.

6. **Decide whether to proceed with planning for the educational program.** This final decision seems obvious. It is specifically mentioned, though, because needs assessments can become ends in themselves. Sometimes the findings are reported, but are not used to plan programs. If the information gathered points toward a needed and cost-effective program, then proceed with planning. If not, the data may indicate other program directions worth pursuing. Additional information may be necessary, though, to confirm their potential for success.

CONCLUSION

Determining or assessing needs of adult learners is a vital part of continuing education program planning. We have presented a strategy for determining needs that consists of making six basic decisions. We have discussed the basis for those decisions by describing types of programs, by evaluating sources of information and data collection methods, and by establishing criteria for selecting those sources and techniques.

Still, assessing needs is a difficult aspect of program planning. Temptations exist to rely only on familiar methods and to equate what is popularly demanded for what is needed. Yet planners of continuing education programs are responsible for creating opportunities for adults to grow. At times such growth may depend on identifying the most critical, not necessarily the most popular, educational needs.

Identifying the most critical educational needs may require expanding the ways needs have typically been assessed. Expanding the ways needs are determined may require gradual change. Given the demands of time and responsibility, using immediately all the procedures described in this pamphlet could be overwhelming. Instead, careful expansion over a period of time is a more satisfying way to grow as a program planner. Such growth may be difficult, but it will contribute to more effective continuing education programs.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

General Information on Assessing Needs

Knowles, Malcolm. *The Modern Practice of Adult Education.* New York: Association Press, 1970, especially pp. 79-120 and 273-284.

McMahon, Ernest E. *Needs—Of People and Their Communities—and the Adult Educator.* Washington, D.C.: Adult Education Association of the U.S.A., 1970.

Monette, Maurice L. "The Concept of Educational Need: An Analysis of Selected Literature," *Adult Education* 27 (1977), pp. 116-127.

Monette, Maurice L. "Need Assessment: A Critique of Philosophical Assumptions," *Adult Education* 29 (1979), pp. 83-95.

Explanation of Specific Techniques

Questionnaires and Surveys:

Berdie, Douglas, and Anderson, John F. *Questionnaires: Design and Use.* Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1974.

Oppenheim, A.N. *Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement.* New York: Basic Books, 1966.

Payne, Stanley L. *The Art of Asking Questions.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951.

Delphi:

Cyphert, Frederick R., and Gant, Walter L. "The Delphi Technique: A Case Study," *Phi Delta Kappan* 52 (1971), pp. 272-273.

Linstone, Harold A., and Turoff, Murray (eds.). *The Delphi Method: Techniques and Applications.* Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1975.

Rossman, Mark H., and Bunning, Richard L. "Knowledge and Skills for the Adult Educator: A Delphi Study," *Adult Education* 28 (1978), pp. 139-155.

Interviews:

Kahn, Robert L., and Cannell, Charles F. *The Dynamics of Interviewing: Theory, Techniques, and Cases.* New York: Wiley, 1957.

Weiss, Carol H. "Interviewing in Evaluation Research," in Elmer L. Struening and Marcia Guttentag (eds.), *Handbook of Evaluation Research.* Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications, 1975.

Nominal Groups:

Delbecq, Andre L., and Andrew H. Van De Ven. "A Group Process Model for Problem Identification and Program Planning," *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 7 (1971), pp. 466-492.

Green, Thad B., and Paul H. Pietri. "Doing Nominal Grouping to Improve Upward Communication," in Jerry L. Gray and Frederick A. Starke (eds), *Readings in Organizational Behavior.* Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, Columbus, Ohio, 1977.

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THE PLANNING COMMITTEE: WHEN AND HOW TO USE ONE

CHARLES E. KOZOLL
University of Illinois

OFFICE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

"To committee or not to committee" is a decision faced by many a program planner, in continuing education and elsewhere. Making that decision should involve answering the following questions:

1. Can the ideas and advice of committees help you plan better continuing education programs?
2. What specific contributions do you think committees can make to program planning and operation?
3. What are the limitations or disadvantages of using a committee?

These three questions have a somewhat negative tone. They aren't meant to dissuade you from considering committee use, however, when appropriate. This pamphlet was written to help you work effectively with committees, should you plan to use them. It deals with the role these groups can play, their advantages, their disadvantages, the forms they assume, and how to best employ their talents.

There are definite strategies for working with committees. One of these involves an honest look at the clear assets and liabilities of committees as groups involved in the development and operation of continuing education programs. Before forming a committee, give some thought to its potential value and possible disadvantages. You want to decide whether a committee is really going to contribute to the planning process or cause more difficulty in formation and operation than its value would merit. This discussion should not be interpreted as a negative attitude toward advisory or planning committees. In many settings they are invaluable. They are not, however, an absolute necessity in the program planning process. Committees are an aid to planning, which can be but need not be used.

ADVANTAGES OF PLANNING COMMITTEES

There are five clear advantages to working with planning committees:

1. **Stimulate interest.** A committee composed of knowledgeable individuals who are interested in the proposed topic of a program can do much to stimulate interest in it among the target audience. Their involvement in the development of a program increases the likelihood that potential participants will see it as useful. The names of planning committee members on a brochure tells the readers that a group to be trusted guided the program's development.

2. **Provide different perspectives.** Ideally members of the committee are selected because of their knowledge of a topic and what they can contribute to make the program more effective. They also know the population, professional groups or organizations whose members will be invited to participate in the program. While the individual responsible for coordinating the effort may know a great deal about the topic(s) to be addressed, different ideas and perspectives and the stimulation of enthusiastic people meeting to plan will add a great deal to the quality of the final program.

3. **Enhance credibility.** Well-known individuals can bring credibility to the program. Their names on an announcement or brochure and the informal support contributed are valuable to the image the potential program has among its target audience.

4. Determine content. A committee can play an important role in selecting program topics, speakers, and discussion leaders. The right group knows what information will be of most value and how that information would best be presented. The committee can relate experiences with past programs to assist in the organization of the program.

5. Evaluate the program. The committee could be asked to play a role in evaluating how effective the program will be or has been. The members can comment on what questions will be asked of participants, respond themselves, and examine the results.

There are probably additional advantages. These five alone would motivate most planners to say that a first critical step is to form a committee to help plan the next program. Before jumping to that decision, look at six potential problems that could occur in committee formation and operation.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS (DISADVANTAGES)

The following become problems when they are not dealt with wisely by leaders or administrators. The detail inherent in attending to these six could take away valuable time needed to develop the program. Unless they are handled well, the committee may control the program's direction, rather than contribute to its effectiveness.

1. **Size.** Too small a committee may limit the diversity of ideas and make the opinions reached suspect among the wider audience viewing that group in operation. Too many people make meeting together quite difficult and generally mitigate against the effective operation of a committee. A group of between six and nine may be optimum.

2. **Representation.** The group should be so composed as to allow all interests to be represented. In some instances, getting the fullest representation of points of view will require bringing individuals who normally don't see or speak to each other. They could live in distant cities, for example. Their involvement in a committee may mean the committee setting becomes the opportunity for business not related to the program to be conducted.

3. **Control and direction.** Depending upon the size and nature of the group, it is entirely conceivable that the planner could lose control of the committee and the directions it takes. A certain amount of flexibility and a free wheeling spirit to encourage ideas certainly will be beneficial. But the convener of a committee must be mindful of the implicit problems of bringing together strong minded individuals who may have different ideas of where the program ought to be going. How you handle this potential difficulty depends on your leadership style.

4. **Tasks and limits.** It is extremely desirable for the committee members to be given some very clear tasks and to understand the limits to their activities. Committees should not be formed without a specific charge.

A committee, however, might decide to go beyond the bounds of the task or determine that the task for which it has been convened is really not the most important one to address. Again, the group's convenor has the responsibility for determining how far the committee should go and for urging it to stay on course.

5. Meetings and agendas. Getting busy people together for a meeting always is difficult. Quite often, the very people who are best suited to serve on the committee have many other responsibilities. Assembling the total group at one time becomes not just difficult but impossible. There is the additional problem of organizing a meeting to cover what is necessary within a short period of time, in order to capitalize on the limited interest the committee members may have. The organization of those meetings to bring people on the committee up-to-date so that they can contribute to the program's planning may involve a lot of additional work that had not been anticipated when the program planning process began. Theoretically, that extra time and effort should be anticipated. Maybe there is more of it than the committee's value to planning the program would warrant.

6. Expectations. There are at least two sides to the issue of expectations. One is what assistance the program planner expects to obtain from a committee. More work from committee members could emerge, in which case there is cause for joy. There may be considerably less, including a very significant lack of enthusiasm for what is being planned. It also may be clear that the program planner doesn't really have the

topic well in hand and must go back to do some thinking before addressing the committee again. The planner loses credibility. This emphasizes the need for clarity in expectations from the group's convenor to those who will serve on it.

The other dimension of expectations has to do with how those on the committee feel, especially what they think they derive from participation. The least of the expectations may be that the program planner will be available to serve on one of their committees in the future. A second is that they might become paid speakers at the event. A third, potentially negative, is that they are helping the program planner to increase the program's credibility. Committee members may not object to this, if informed in advance. Finally, there is also the expectation by the committee that it will have a more responsible or less responsible role than that anticipated by the planner. The range of positive and negative expectations is great, and the planner should consider them when thinking about the role the committee might play.

All of the potential disadvantages can be handled, either in advance of forming a committee or during its early stages of operation.

A PAUSE TO THINK

Before moving into the next section, think for a moment about when it will be desirable to use a committee in relation to the development of a continuing education program. Bear in mind the distinct assets which a committee can provide and the potential problem areas. Draw them together as you evaluate the following process suggested for identifying the need for a committee, forming the committee, using it and terminating it, with good feeling all around.

CHOOSING A COMMITTEE FORMAT

The nature of committees in a variety of settings has been thoroughly researched. You may wish to consult the bibliography in the back of this pamphlet for additional sources on the nature of committees. The forms committees in continuing education program development can take are similar to any other group used to advise or plan.

Basically, there are three kinds of committees that can contribute to program effectiveness: a true planning committee, an advisory committee, and an informal *ad hoc* idea producing group. The wise program developer will try to clearly distinguish between these three groups and be sure that the one he/she structures is right for the task. The functions of all three are discussed below.

1. The true planning committee. If the program planner really wants a group of people to help plan a program, then a planning committee is needed. It will be assembled to make decisions, e.g., what that program will have as its objectives, learning activities, market

or participant group, and evaluation procedure. That group should be so formed and organized as to be able to reach a consensus relatively easily. Asking them to make these important decisions about the program usually leads them to a heightened commitment and interest in its success. When sound choices of committee members are made, excellent programs, important and attractive to the potential audience, can be planned. It is easy to turn an advisory or idea development committee into a planning one, but nearly impossible to stop a planning committee from making decisions. They do not move from that role of maximum "power" to a relatively weak one of advisory status;

2. **The advisory committee.** Some of the same tasks that a planning committee takes on can be performed by an advisory committee. It will most likely deal with objectives, learning activities, potential participants, and the ways to most effectively evaluate the entire effort. But the members of the committee should be aware at the outset that their role is to provide advice. This means that the convenor of the group will carefully listen to their suggestions and truly appreciate the time and intellect expended by the group. But you (the convenor) are under no obligation to accept any or all of what they provide, and they should understand that. More than likely, you will take a good deal of what is offered, but have the opportunity to mold and shape it yourself. In addition, you will present ideas to them for reaction, which is quite the converse of what happens at a planning committee meeting where the agenda and direction often generate from the membership. In the planning in-

stance, you are "support staff" to them. The converse is true in this advisory situation.

3. The ad hoc idea group. When the program is very much in the development stage and you don't want to make a commitment to it yet, this last group can be very helpful. The members are not formed into an advisory body just yet. In fact, they may never meet or function as a total group. They form an initial selection of individuals whose opinions you value and who can be sought out for reactions and advice. A few telephone calls or luncheon meetings with key individuals can provide you with enough ideas to determine that proceeding ahead is wise, that further thought is needed, or that the idea should be totally abandoned. The same group should be used to legitimize an idea in development of a program.

USING A COMMITTEE WISELY

Now that you've decided to use a committee and have selected the appropriate format, you need to develop a procedure for best using your committee. There are six basic steps in this process, which you should examine before deciding whether a committee is going to be of value or not.

1. Purpose. What value does a committee have in relation to the directions being taken with a particular program? How much will a planning, advisory, or idea

committee contribute? Are the people best suited to serve on such a committee available and will they have the time to really make a contribution?

2. **Composition.** If a decision has been made that one of the three types of committees is desirable, then thought should be given to the outcomes of bringing a group together. Any group constituted takes on an identity of its own and the effective program planner has to be aware of what happens when a variety of individuals come together to plan, advise, or generate ideas. Committee watchers have labeled the dynamics that occur in such a setting as the "chemistry" of the situation. You have to be concerned about how well that group will "mix" and how useful it will be for your purposes. Included in that judgment is whether the individuals assembled will get along, will complement and stimulate each other in their ideas. They should not conflict because of status or orientation differences and they should not use the committee as a forum for agendas that are peculiarly their own. In essence, you will have to look at the politics of working with a committee not only as it relates to your program but to what ideas, prejudices, and agendas the members will bring to the meetings.

3. **Meetings.** If you have determined that a committee is needed and that you can get the right people together in the best combination, the next step is to consider the number of times they will be needed. Busy people appreciate information about the limit of their responsibilities on a committee. They want to know what will be done and how long it will take to get those tasks accomplished. The more precision you

can attach to what is expected of a committee, the more enthusiastic the participative response will likely be.

As you think about meetings, also consider how much information you will have to get to the committee so that it can function effectively. Think about the least amount of information rather than the most. Busy people will appreciate the fact that material has been organized in advance so that their time can be used to best advantage. The chances are that if you send too much, little or nothing will be read. Five pages stand a much better chance of getting examined than twenty-five.

You will also have to consider the length of meetings and making maximum use of a very tight agenda. Trying to accomplish too much in a too-long meeting can be as disastrous as attempting to provide too much background information in advance.

4. **Followup.** If the meetings have been successful, it is important to provide summaries for those in attendance and to follow-up on suggestions presented by committee members. They will appreciate the fact that their ideas have not only been listened to but used. They will see that their participation was for honest and useful purposes. The likelihood of their support for that and future programs will be increased.

5. **Recognition.** If the group has truly been of assistance, take pains to recognize the membership individually and collectively. They can be, for instance, recognized during the program and on the program

materials. Another approach is to write a letter of thanks to their employer if time was made available for the committee members to attend the meetings. Providing lunch or dinner around meetings is another way of showing appreciation.

6. **Termination.** Once the tasks of the committee have been completed, it is best to bring the committee to a close by writing a general letter of thanks for their participation and indicating that the work has been done. Another thing busy people on committees enjoy is the idea that they have completed a job, that it's over and there won't be other calls to meet on that program.

CONCLUSION

We have tried in this pamphlet to define the advantages and disadvantages of committees and to describe the various formats you might choose to help you with your planning. Once (and if) you decide to go ahead, follow the six-step procedure we've outlined for mastering the elusive committee.

Your ability to form and use an advisory committee or a planning committee will allow you another strategy for planning and delivering effective programs. Committees are critical in some situations, helpful in others, and perhaps a liability in certain instances. A wise planner will neither jump to organize one immediately nor shun its use. The decision to form or not will be based on the nature of the program and, clearly, what a committee can contribute. Obviously, your decision will have to be made again with each new program.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The literature on committee use is expanding. A number of useful items have been prepared by the Cooperative Extension Service of the USDA:

Lowry, Sheldon G. *Committees...a key to group leadership*

Lowry and Holik, John S. *Parliamentary Procedure*

An excellent overview to committee operation was written by Leonard Nadler in Priorities in Adult Education, edited by David B. Rauch entitled *The Functioning of Boards and Committees in Adult Education.*

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ADVISING OR COUNSELING ADULTS

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PREFACE

This pamphlet is intended primarily for advisers and counselors who are in an academic continuing education setting. It will also be useful for paraprofessional counselors and people in other professions who are advising and planning programs for adults, such as:

- social workers,
- health professionals conducting continuing education programs, and
- business and industry training directors.

INTRODUCTION

There are five basic areas in which adults seek assistance: self-understanding, educational and career planning, personal problem-solving, advocacy, and referral. In order to be of assistance, advisers and counselors must understand (1) adult needs and (2) the roles they must play to help adults meet those needs. Assisting adults requires knowledge, proper skills, and the appropriate attitude.

This pamphlet will discuss those five basic areas in which adults need assistance and the roles that the adviser or counselor must play in order to assist adults in meeting their needs. In addition, specific problems and alternative solutions will be discussed for each of the five basic areas. A list of concepts and skills that the adviser or counselor must possess in order to be more effective in working with adults will be given as a summary.

AREAS OF ASSISTANCE

SELF-UNDERSTANDING

Problem

Many adults who have been away from formalized learning for a few years have not been tested for a long time regarding their abilities, values, and interests. While you as an adviser or counselor may feel that it is not necessary to test adults in order to provide services which will help them to succeed in programs, the adults themselves will often request testing — they feel the necessity to see in black and white a test score which says they have certain abilities or interests. On the other hand, if testing is a blank prerequisite to participation in programs or activities, some adults may feel threatened or uneasy as they are frightened to take tests because of bad experiences with testing or because they are afraid of failure.

Most adults have not been exposed to all the career opportunities that are available to them. Few received comprehensive career counseling in high school and, with new technologies and careers constantly emerging in our society, most people know only about the very traditional careers in any detail. Often adults who are educated beyond high school have a narrow focus on career opportunities outside their general career area.

Therefore, **adult client needs related to self-understanding** are:

- help in assessing their interests, abilities, and values; and
- information related to career opportunities.

Possible Solutions

Advisers and counselors need to recognize that few standardized assessment instruments are appropriate for adults.

Therefore, they should become familiar with those tests and inventories that do measure adult abilities, interests, and values. These instruments should be used only when they are requested by the client or when, after an advisement or counseling session, the client agrees to be tested. Other less formal methods of assessment for abilities, interests, and values should also be considered when helping adults to understand themselves better.

Most adults possess skills that are not quantified and that will not necessarily appear when they are tested. Advisers and counselors should also help adults look at other factors in assessing their abilities, interests, and values: life-style preferences, past work experiences (both the meaningful and the uneventful), volunteer experiences, hobbies, leisure-time activities, self-assessment of skills and abilities, and previous school experiences including subject preferences and extra-curricular activities.

Therefore, the **adviser or counselor, in relation to self-understanding and assessment,** should be able to help clients:

1. assess their interests, abilities, and values formally by using instruments especially designed for adults and informally by discussing life-style preferences;
2. assess realistically past educational experiences that may have been frightening and discouraging; and
3. clarify and define individual preferences which they have.

EDUCATIONAL AND CAREER PLANNING

Problem

The adults who are being advised and counseled are trying to juggle, integrate, and resolve conflicts between numerous roles: roles such as those of parent, spouse, student, worker, head of household, child of aging parents, homemaker, user of leisure time, church member, citizen, and friend. They feel both internal and external pressures related to these various roles.

Many also feel the press of time from three different perspectives — physical, cultural, and emotional. They are extremely sensitive to the age/time factor and often feel the lack of time to pursue what they ideally would like to do, especially career-wise.

Because of the multiple roles they play and the time they feel they have left to accomplish their goals, adults definitely want to avoid dead-end streets. Most adults will demand pertinent information related to educational programs and career choices, particularly job trends and employment possibilities. Advisers and counselors should be aware that often adults fail in the educational setting because they enter programs inadequately prepared and ill-advised.

Therefore, **adult client needs related to educational and career-planning** are:

- help in realistically integrating various roles into the educational and career-planning process,
- assistance in putting into perspective the age/time factor and its implications toward planning, and
- pertinent information about educational opportunities and the most appropriate level at which to pursue training.

Possible Solutions

Advisers and counselors must have the ability to help the adult client set long-range plans and identify short-term goals that can be accomplished in logical increments in order to reach the ultimate plan. Setting daily and weekly goals to reach the final plan will help adults organize their lives within a framework that will not be too discouraging and frustrating. Without more workable goals, the long-range plan may seem too "far away" and too difficult to obtain.

While helping adults set their short- and long-term plans, advisers or counselors must be perceptive to the underlying goals and drives of their clients. It will often take more time than the initial advising session for adults to reveal what they really want to accomplish. The economic status of adult clients and the obligations they feel toward their other responsibilities may interfere with the adults' ability to reach out and discuss what they would really like to do career-wise. You must also be aware of the fact that some adults may have inadequate study skills that need to be planned for in the planning process. The adult client may be reluctant to discuss these shortcomings with you and may not reveal to you that any inadequacies related to reading or writing skills or study habits exist.

Because many adult students have numerous other responsibilities, the adviser or counselor must possess some skills for short-term counseling. An adult may ask for advice during the process of registration, in a student lounge area, or during the only fifteen-minute block of time the adult can find, which may even be during the lunch hour. Group counseling and advising in the setting of an orientation meeting, small group meeting, or classroom session can be very beneficial to the adult student, especially if these sessions are held during a time block in which they have already been committed by their schedules to the educational setting. A good adviser or counselor should have a vast amount of information readily available and be able to help the client to quickly find useful and helpful information.

The number and length of the advising or counseling sessions will vary with the client. While some adults only have time for short-term counseling sessions, other adults will require and want several planning sessions.

The adult who requires and wants more than one counseling session should be involved in activities outside these sessions. Adults are accustomed to doing things for themselves and do not mind spending time between counseling sessions on special assignments as long as they are not too time-consuming. Special assignments could include searching for information about occupations, interviewing professionals in fields they are considering, reading about career planning, writing about life experiences, or outlining their own steps and goals for the next career planning session.

Advisers and counselors should help the adult combine action and contemplation in the career-planning process. Clients should be encouraged to use their own resources to solve problems; it is the role of the helper to be the catalyst in this process. Advisers and counselors should force adults to be realistic in their choices, but at the same time they should not display stereotypic thinking based strictly on age about careers adults should pursue.

Therefore, the **adviser or counselor, in relation to educational and career-planning,** should use short-term counseling skills and active counseling techniques to help the adults:

1. map out short-term and long-range goals,
2. be realistic in the decision-making process,
3. use their own resources to solve problems, and
4. to combine action and contemplation.

PERSONAL PROBLEMS

Problem

As adults grow older and their lives become fuller with added roles and responsibilities, coping with role conflicts, managing time, and handling stress may become critical problems. At some time during the life cycle, most adults will feel anxiety and insecurity regarding themselves and their own goals, values, and aspirations. Depending upon where they are in their own personal life cycle, they may experience restlessness about their lives; be concerned about making commitments; sense frustration and helplessness about change that may be occurring in their vocation, marriage, or living arrangements; express fear and concern about the maturing and aging of their bodies; or be experiencing a full-out authenticity crisis. The need to share those concerns with an adviser, counselor, or some helper becomes crucial to the mental health of many adults.

As adults progress through the life cycle and experience anxieties and insecurities, they need help in gaining more confidence and increasing their self-concept. This is particularly true of adults who decide to take on new roles such as re-entering the work force or going back to school. If they have been away from work or school for a period of time, they may lack confidence in themselves and their ability to succeed. They fear failure and the way in which that failure would be accepted by themselves, family members, friends, and other students.

Therefore, the **adult client needs related to personal problems** are:

- help in understanding and integrating life cycle roles and
- assistance in gaining more confidence in themselves and alleviating anxieties and insecurities.

Possible Solutions

Advisers and counselors should be aware that most adults will be very reluctant to discuss personal problems at the first session. If they do discuss them very openly they may be experiencing feelings of desperation unless they already know the adviser or counselor fairly well. Often adults will seek advisement or counseling on the pretense of educational or career planning when it is really a personal problem that is of prime concern. They are hoping that the adviser or counselor will create a climate in which they will feel comfortable enough to talk. Therefore, it is of extreme importance for the adviser or counselor to create an open, free atmosphere that shows empathy, warmth, genuineness, and respect for the client so that good rapport can be established as quickly as possible.

In order for advisers or counselors to show empathy, warmth, genuineness, and respect for the adult, they must understand adult development, trends in the adult life cycle, and major forces in the client's life. Small group experiences can be very helpful to adults if common concerns are discussed so that they can see that other people are experiencing the same kinds of problems.

Advisers and counselors should help clients understand themselves and their environment. They should help clients understand (1) how events in history are affecting their lives, (2) the structure of the social world, and (3) environmental hazards. Some adults need help to understand, within the context of the external pressures, what their rights are and how to go about standing up for those rights in an effective manner.

The adviser or counselor should help clients plan short-term experiences in which they will succeed. Activities of this kind will help the adult to diminish self-defeating attitudes and gain more self-respect.

Therefore, the **adviser or counselor, in relation to personal problems,** should help the adult:

1. understand and deal with life cycle trends, external forces, and the environmental forces as they affect the adult's personal life;
2. diminish self-defeating attitudes; and
3. create a helping environment of trust and openness.

ADVOCACY
Problem

Many adults need help in solving problems related to their economic status and their sense of responsibility to others. If they decide to go back to school, they sometimes need help in paying for tuition, books, transportation, babysitting, and additional living costs. Many families simply cannot bear the burden of this extra expense coming from their family budgets.

They also need assistance in being accepted by their peers and faculty. Faculty, in particular, need to understand needs of adults. They need help in realizing that adults may be sharing their education with full-time jobs while trying to integrate numerous roles, that study problems may be a factor to their classroom success, that they may have selected courses poorly, and that they lack confidence in their abilities and fear not being accepted.

Therefore, the **needs of adults in relation to the advocate role** that the adviser or counselor should play are:

- help in solving financial constraints and responsibility to others and
- assistance in being accepted by their teachers, administrators, and other younger students.

Possible Solutions

The adviser or counselor should be able to provide adults with information about financial aid, both long-term and low-interest. In addition, the adviser or counselor should be familiar with various agencies and organizations that grant financial aid, provide information to the agency personnel about adult students, and encourage the top officials of these agencies to award financial aid to part-time students.

Advisers or counselors should become active on various committees within their own organization in order to educate the faculty and administration about the needs of the adult student. The adviser's or counselor's advocate role is much more easily performed if the staff and administration are known on a more personal basis and rapport and credibility have been established with individual committee members.

Many adults become very discouraged when they try to enroll or become involved with the institution. The same admission procedures and mechanics of attendance, including application processes and fees, testing requirements, and registration procedures that are required of younger students, are often required of adults. The adviser or counselor should work with registration officials and various admission committees to point out some of the uniqueness of adult students, such as their uneasiness about testing, the validity and reliability of certain tests for adults, the lack of time for long registration procedures, and the discouragement that adults feel when passed from one individual to another in order to get a question answered. The adviser or counselor should serve as an advocate for adult students to provide easier entry into the educational environment.

Therefore, the **adviser or counselor, in relation to the advocate role,** should help the adult student by:

1. encouraging various financial aid agencies to offer more financial aid to part-time students;
2. serving on various committees to help alter admission procedures and other mechanics of attendance; and
3. helping faculty and administrators to better understand the adult student.

REFERRAL
Problem

Often adults who come to you for advice and counsel would have their needs better served at an institution or agency other than yours. Adults may be totally unaware of other appropriate institutions that may be of help to them.

Therefore, the **need of adults in relation to referral** is that they:

- need help in solving personal and educational problems, but may be unaware of the institution best suited to help them solve their problems.

Possible Solutions

It is the responsibility of advisers or counselors to know about referral and consulting resources of various kinds so they can refer the adult student to another institution if theirs is not the most appropriate one to help solve a particular problem. To be most helpful, advisers and counselors should know the individuals in those institutions to ensure that their client's problems will be resolved by a capable helper.

Advisers and counselors should know their immediate and surrounding communities and people, and be active in some organizations and associations. It is very difficult to become familiar with agencies and the individuals in those agencies without becoming involved in the community.

Therefore, **advisers and counselors, in relation to the referral role,** should:

1. know about referral and consulting resources, including various kinds of agencies and personnel within the agencies and
2. be active in and familiar with the communities nearby and know their people.

DESIRED CONCEPTS AND SKILLS

In summary, for an adviser or counselor who wants to be a professional who provides the best possible help to adult students, the following list of desired concepts and skills will be of interest and help.

1. Understand adult behavior and development.
2. Recognize personality traits of the re-entry student.
3. Understand frustrations that are often felt regarding aging.
4. Recognize client strengths and motivate them in the direction of their goals.
5. Assess your own attitudes, beliefs, and values.
6. Be as free as possible of sexual and age biases.
7. Have good listening and communication skills.
8. Communicate at the level of expectation.
9. Create an atmosphere of warmth, respect, concreteness, and genuineness.
10. Know about, and use correctly, decisionmaking skills.
11. Help the client accept and work around her/his limitations.
12. Give straight answers.
13. Have information that the client needs or know where to get the information.
14. Know about and appropriately use short-term counseling techniques.
15. Understand and use suitable tests.
16. Know your community and its resources.
17. Possess an empathic understanding of social issues.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READINGS

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Havighurst, Robert. *Developmental Tasks and Education.* New York: Longman, Green, 1952.

Havighurst, Robert and Betty Orr. *Adult Education and Adult Needs.* Chicago: Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults, 1956.

Klein, Paul and Ruth Moffitt. *Counseling Techniques in Adult Education.* New York: McGraw Hill, 1946.

Knox, Alan B. *Adult Development and Learning.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, Inc., 1977.

Neugarten, Bernice. *Middle Age and Aging.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

Neugarten, Bernice and Associates. *Personality in Middle and Late Life.* New York: Atherton Press, 1964.

Porter, Lee. "Adults Have Special Counseling Needs," *Adult Leadership,* vol. 18, March 1970, pp. 275-276.

Schlossberg, Nancy. "The Case for Counseling Adults," *The Counseling Psychologist,* vol. 6, no. 1, 1976, pp. 33-36.

Sheehy, Gail. *Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life.* New York: Bantam Books, 1974.

Troll, Lilian and Carol Nowak, "How Old are You? The Question of Age Bias in the Counseling of Adults," *The Counseling Psychologist,* vol. 6, no. 1, 1976, pp. 41-43.

BRIEF LISTING OF INSTRUMENTS FOR ADULTS

INTELLIGENCE

General Aptitude Test Battery. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor.

PERSONALITY

Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire. Champaign, Illinois: Institute for Personality and Ability Testing, Inc.

VALUES

Survey of Personal Values. Chicago: Science Research Associates.

Survey of Interpersonal Values. Chicago: Science Research Associates.

Work Values Inventory. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

INTEREST

Self-Directed Search: Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

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READINGS IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT • NO. 5

HOW TO PLAN AND ADMINISTER SUCCESSFUL BUDGETS FOR NONCREDIT CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

ROBERT SIMERLY
University of Illinois

OFFICE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Simerly is director of conferences and institutes in the Office of Continuing Education and Public Service at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He has held a wide variety of faculty and administrative positions in the United States and in Europe.

Dr. Simerly has provided the administrative leadership for planning and conducting over 1,000 national and international conferences, institutes, workshops, and symposia. In addition, he is often asked by groups to consult on topics devoted to helping professionals improve their organizational effectiveness. These workshops are in such areas as: *Planning and Conducting Successful Meetings, Increasing Your Leadership Effectiveness, Organizational Conflict Management, Planning for Change in Organizations, Long-Range Strategic Planning, Managing the Continuing Education Enterprise, Team Building,* and *Improving Communication Skills.*

He is the author of numerous articles on professional development and in this monograph he presents a systems approach on how to plan and administer successful budgets for noncredit continuing education programs.

IN THIS MONOGRAPH YOU WILL LEARN . . .

1. a basic set of assumptions that will guide you through the process of budgeting for noncredit continuing education programs,
2. why distinguishing between fixed and variable costs is necessary in order to plan successful noncredit continuing education budgets,
3. an easy method to calculate an appropriate number of registrants for a program to break even,
4. how to avoid the ten most common mistakes people often make in planning budgets for noncredit continuing education programs,
5. a checklist approach to budgeting so you do not leave important items out of the program budget, and
6. the answers to some important questions frequently asked by people who plan noncredit continuing education programs.

INTRODUCTION

Budget planning is probably the most misunderstood part of noncredit continuing education program planning. Indeed, the anxiety that it generates often manifests itself in a wide variety of ways. You will often hear such comments as:

> "I only work on planning the program content. I leave the budgeting to someone else."
>
> "Every time I get into budgeting it only generates conflict in the group with whom I'm working. I'd rather let someone else handle the budget–and the conflict."
>
> "I'm not good at math. In fact, I'm terrified of it."

Becoming an expert in budget planning and management is a skill that all administrators of noncredit continuing education programs need. The mechanics of the process are so easy that they can be learned in a short period of time. With a pocket or desk calculator you can easily handle all mathematical calculations.

An important part of planning budgets is the *human* aspect of the budgetary process. Somewhere between the glimmer of an idea for a noncredit program and the actual execution of the program comes the stark reality that we have to compromise our idealized dream of having thousands of participants breaking down the doors to our SOLD-OUT STANDING-ROOM-ONLY program!

The stark reality is that we have to deal with the program as it will actually be presented. Almost all noncredit continuing education programs are compromises between what we would like to have and what we can afford. This process of negotiation and compromise sometimes generates conflict. *It is this conflict that can create negative overtones in the budget planning process.*

For this reason it is important to examine the basic assumptions that should be a part of the repertoire of every person who plans and administers noncredit continuing education programs. Coming to terms with the reality behind these basic assumptions is critical to planning and administering successful noncredit budgets.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

1. Planning and managing successful budgets for noncredit programs involves more than just the mathematical calculation of the items in the budget.
2. Managing any conflict that may occur in planning budgets is a natural part of the daily routine of professionals in continuing education.
3. Planning for the creation of positive attitudes toward the budgeting process is an integral part of total program planning.
4. Allowing everyone involved in planning a program access to the budget will usually produce a better budget, as well as more satisfied people.
5. Recognizing that we in continuing education must provide continuing education regarding successful budget planning for the many groups with whom we work.
6. Realizing that introducing a tentative rough draft of a budget is essential in the early stages of programmatic discussions. This helps everyone focus on concrete elements of the program and establishes a base line from which to begin negotiating a final budget.

These basic assumptions directly influence our behavior as we engage in the total development of a program. Program planners who endorse these basic assumptions will develop creative budget strategies appropriate to their own individual programs. Professionals in our field see negotiating, compromise, and conflict management as a natural part of their daily activity.

FIVE STEPS TO PLANNING SUCCESSFUL BUDGETS FOR NONCREDIT CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Planning successful budgets for noncredit continuing education programs is not a magical or mystical process. It involves hard work, accurately identifying all costs for a program and displaying budget data so the internal logic of how you establish a registration fee is clear.

STEP 1: Identify as accurately as possible all costs associated with each part of the program.

Case Study 1

You have been asked to plan a one-day local workshop entitled *Strategic Long-Range Planning for Health Care Administrators.* The group of potential participants consists of such people as administrators of nursing homes, chief administrators of hospitals, and directors of nursing education.

You and a planning committee have identified a list of 1,200 people within a two-hour drive of the program site. This is the group to which you will mail brochures.

The following are expenses for the program:

1. Two local professionals will be the workshop presenters. They will each receive a $200.00 honorarium.
2. Since one of these consultants is already employed in your organization, you must pay 33 percent of the $200.00 honorarium to cover your organization's fringe benefits. This 33 percent is charged as a direct expense for the program.

3. The consultants have indicated that they have modest needs for audio-visuals. These will cost $50.00.
4. Lunch will be included as part of the registration fee. The cost will be $7.50 per person, plus 5 percent tax and 15 percent gratuity.
5. You will have morning and afternoon coffee breaks. These will be $1.50 each, plus 5 percent tax and 15 percent gratuity.
6. A newspaper advertisement for the program will be $75.00.
7. Five members of the planning committee will receive complimentary registrations. In addition, the two consultants will eat lunch and participate in coffee breaks. You will have to pay food costs for these seven people.
8. You plan to do two mailings of the brochure. You will print 2,500 brochures at 8 cents each.
9. You will mail 2,400 brochures at a cost of 5.2 cents each.
10. Typesetting for the brochure will be $32.50.
11. The total charge for duplicating workshop materials will be $85.00.
12. You and the planning committee have decided that fifty people is a realistic break-even point.
13. You need to charge $500.00 as an administrative fee for your office to cover expenses for such items as a portion of your salary, phones, and supplies.
14. Add 10 percent of all fixed costs (excluding food for paid registrants) as a miscellaneous category to take care of unexpected expenses.
15. You plan to offer people the option of charging their registration fee to Visa or Master Charge. You must pay the bank 2.5% of the total registration fee for this service.

STOP!

Do not proceed until you attempt to establish the per person cost for the workshop based on the data in the case study. There are no tricks or hidden items in the case study. There is only one correct answer.

Now write the total cost per person for the workshop here______.

The following steps explain how to arrive at a registration fee for the workshop described in the case study.

STEP 2:

Plan your budget data so the logic of how you arrived at your registration fee can be easily understood.

In order to do this you must first distinguish between fixed and variable costs.

Fixed Costs are the costs associated with the program that will not be affected by the number of people who register. In other words, no matter how many people register, these costs will remain the same.

Variable Costs are the costs of the program that will vary according to the number of people who register.

Using the information supplied in the case study, the following represents your fixed and variable costs for the proposed program.

Fixed Costs

Item Number in the Case Study	Expense
1. 2 Honoraria @ $200.00 each	$400.00
2. Fringe benefits @ 33% of 200.00	66.00
3. Audiovisual costs	50.00
6. Newspaper advertisement	75.00
7. Complimentary registrations: 5 planning committee members and 2 consultants = 7 total complimentary registrants. 7 x $12.60 (total variable costs per person)	88.20

8. Printing 2,500 brochures @ 8¢ each	200.00
9. Mail 2,400 brochures @ 5.2¢ each	124.80
10. Typesetting for brochure	32.50
11. Duplicating	85.00
13. Your administrative fee	500.00
Subtotal of fixed costs	$1,621.50
14. Add 10% for miscellaneous	162.15
Total fixed costs	$1,783.65

Variable costs

Item Number in the Case Study	Expense
4. Lunch per person	7.50
5. 2 coffee breaks @ $1.50 each	3.00
Subtotal	10.50
Plus 5% tax and 15% gratuity on food	2.60
Total variable costs per person	12.60

STEP 3: Using the information from your fixed and variable costs, determine how many people you think will attend so you can establish a break-even point.

Establishing Your Break-even Costs

1. Take your total fixed costs and divide by the number guaranteed to break even. $1,783.65 ÷ 50 people = cost per person for fixed costs	$35.67
2. Add the total of your per person variable costs	$12.60
Subtotal of costs for each registrant	$48.27

Since your plan allows people to charge their registration fee to a credit card, 2.5 percent, or $1.21, must be added to the above subtotal of $48.27. The total cost per person is $49.48.

STEP 4: Establish your registration fee so it is equal to or exceeds your total cost for each registrant.

A logical registration fee for the workshop would be $50.00 per person.

STEP 5: Now that you have distinguished between fixed and variable costs and established a registration fee, display this data so the internal logic of how you arrived at your registration fee is clear.

Here is a sample budget form that works well for most noncredit continuing education programs. The logic of how you arrive at a registration fee is easy to understand with this form. It is also easy to modify in order to accommodate the needs of the wide variety of professionals who plan noncredit continuing education programs.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Account no. 119

Office of Continuing Education and Public Service

Division of Conferences and Institutes Activity ID 375

Submitted by **Carol Holden** Preparation date **May 12**

Title **Strategic Long-Range Planning for Health Care Administrators**

Date(s) **December 7** Location **University Inn**

Faculty coordinator **Max Feiffer**

Address **127 South Hall** Phone **372-8146**

Per Person Registration Fee Breakdown:

Fixed fee per person **$35.58** Variable fee per person **$12.60**

Total **$49.38**

Registration Fee **$50**

Break-even atendance **50**

PAYROLL/TRAVEL

List University of Illinois personnel first and add 33 % fringe benefits

Instructors	Travel	Per diem	Honorarium	Other	Date paid
Jeff Brighton			200		
Susan Morrison			200		
33% fringes for					
Brighton			66		
Totals			466		

Approved ________________ Date ____________ C & I Business Manager

Approved ________________ Date ____________ C & I Director

Approved ________________ Date ____________ OCEPS Representative

Copies to:

Master File Business Manager Coordinator Secretary

Account no 119 Title Strategic Long-Range Planning for Health Care Administrators

FIXED COSTS	
Total from page 1	466.00
Administrative travel	
In-house fee	500.00
Bus tours	
Entertainment	
Photography	
Planning committee	
Equipment rental	
Equipment moving	
Physical plant	
General duplicating	85.00
Publicity	
Complimentary expenses	88.22
Graphic design	
Typesetting	32.50
List purchase	
Advertising	75.00
Printing	200.00
2,500 @ 8¢ each	
Mailing/Postage	124.80
2,400 @ 5.2¢ each	
Other	
Audiovisual	50.00
Subtotal	1,621.52

Fixed Cost Summary

1,621.52	Subtotal fixed costs
162.15	Add 10 % Miscellaneous
1,783.67	Total fixed costs divided by 50 people to break even
35.67	Total fixed costs per person

PER PERSON VARIABLE COSTS	
Registration pack	
Notebook	
Paper/pencils	
Per person duplicating	
1 lunch	7.50
2 coffee breaks	3.00
@ 1.50 ea.	
Subtotal	10.50
Plus 5% tax and	
15% gratuity on food	2.10
Total	12.60

Registration Fee

35.67	Per person fixed costs
12.60	Per person variable costs
48.27	Subtotal
	If using VISA/ MASTER CHARGE add
1.21	2.5% of Subtotal
49.48	Total costs per person
50.00	Registration fee
50	People to break even

Using this method for budget planning for noncredit continuing education programs has the following major advantages:

1. It works well with any size program. The size of the program or the amount of income and expenses will not affect the logic of the process.
2. There is a clear internal logic that is easy to follow.
3. Additional expense items can be added to the budget form to meet the special needs of any organization.

In order to demonstrate the flexibility of this budgeting process, here is another case study. This case study is for a much larger conference; however, the budget planning process remains the same. Again, it is necessary to follow the "Five Steps to Planning Successful Budgets for Noncredit Continuing Education Programs."

STEP 1: Identify as accurately as possible all costs associated with each part of the program.

Case Study 2

You have been asked to plan and conduct a three-day conference entitled *A National Symposium on the Financing of Continuing Education*. You will be working with a planning committee. Your job is to present to the committee a budget for the conference. The budget you develop must provide for a high quality conference.

As you work with the planning committee you identify the following parts of the program for which you can establish a reliable dollar amount for expenses:

1. You must recover $2,000.00 as an administrative fee for your office to pay for such items as salaries and phones, as well as other expenses.
2. Participants will be staying in a local hotel and paying their own hotel bills.
3. The hotel will not charge for meeting rooms.

4. Conference registration materials, notebooks, name tags, and maps of the city will cost $5.00 per person.
5. You will mail 15,000 brochures at a bulk-mail rate of 3.7 cents per item plus 6.4 cents per item for labeling and handling in the mailing center that handles large direct mail projects.
6. It will cost you $355.00 to purchase 15,000 mailing labels from various sources.
7. Your local printer has quoted you a price of 12 cents each for the 17,000 brochures that you will print.
8. Graphic design and typesetting for the brochure will be $500.00.
9. Your honoraria and travel for speakers will be:
   Two speakers at $600.00 honoraria each
   Three speakers at $400.00 honoraria each
   Five plane tickets estimated at $450.00 each
   Five per diem allowances of $50.00 per day for four days to cover hotel and meals for speakers
10. Audiovisual equipment rental will be $200.00.
11. Other publicity such as advertisements in professional journals will cost $450.00.
12. Duplicating of additional conference materials will be $345.00.
13. You will have two catered luncheons at $10.00 each, plus 5 percent tax and 15 percent gratuity for each coffee break.
14. You will have five catered coffee breaks at $1.25 each, plus 5 percent tax and 15 percent gratuity for each luncheon.
15. You will have both an opening and closing catered dinner at $15.00 and $4.00 for wine each, plus 5 percent tax, and 15 percent gratuity for each dinner.
16. You will figure 10 percent of your total fixed expenses (excluding notebooks, food, and $25.00 per person returned to the committee) as miscellaneous expenses to take care of unexpected things that occur.
17. The $25.00 of each registration fee returned to the committee is to provide seed money for additional programs.

18. The committee has agreed that they would like to have fifty people for a break-even number and that they will pay for any losses under that number.
19. You have decided to give ten complimentary registrations to people. These will cover all food and registration materials, but not include the $25.00 per person to return to the committee.
20. You estimate that you will spend $300.00 in administrative travel by the time you finish the program.
21. Entertainment at the two dinners will cost a total of $300.00
22. A photographer will be hired to take pictures for press releases, and these costs will total $125.00.
23. Planning committee meetings will cost $50.00. This is for coffee, rolls, and supplies.
24. It will cost $175.00 to have tables and chairs set up and taken down for the conference.
25. You will offer participants the options of charging their registrations to their credit cards. This will add a service fee to the bank of 2.5 percent to the total cost.

STOP!

Again, do not proceed until you attempt to come up with the total cost per person for this conference. Again, there are no tricks or hidden items; there is only one correct answer.

Write the total cost per person for the conference here______.

STEP 2: Plan your budget data so the logic of how you arrived at your registration fee can be easily understood.

To do this you must first distinguish between fixed and variable costs.

Fixed Costs are the costs associated with the program that will not be affected by the number of people who register. In other words, no matter how many people register, these costs will remain the same.

Variable Costs are the costs of the program that will vary according to the number of people who register.

Using the information supplied in the case study, the following represents your fixed and variable costs for the proposed program:

Fixed Costs

Item Number in the Case Study		Expense
1.	Your administrative fee	$2,000.00
5.	15,000 brochures x 10.10¢	1,515.00
6.	Mailing labels	355.00
7.	Print 17,00 brochures @ 12¢	2,040.00
8.	Graphic design and typesetting	500.00
9.	Honoraria and travel	
	2 speakers @ $600.00 each	1,200.00
	3 speakers @ $400.00 each	1,200.00
	5 plane tickets @ $450.00	2,250.00
	5 per diems @ $50.00 x 4 days	1,000.00
10.	Audiovisual rental	200.00
11.	Other publicity costs	450.00
12.	Duplicating	345.00
19.	10 complimentary registrations @ $82.10 each (the total for food and registration packet for each person)	821.00
20.	Administrative travel	300.00
21.	Entertainment	300.00
22.	Photography	125.00
23.	Planning committees	50.00
24.	Equipment moving	175.00
	Subtotal of fixed costs	14,826.00
17.	Add 10 percent miscellaneous	1,482.60
	Total fixed costs	$16,308.60

Variable Costs

4.	Conference registration materials	$5.00
13.	2 luncheons @ $10.00 each	20.00
15.	2 dinners @ $19.00 each	38.00
14.	5 coffee breaks @ $1.25	6.25
	Note: Total food costs are $64.25. Add 5 percent tax and 15 percent gratuity.	12.85
16.	$25.00 per person returned to committee for seed money	25.00
	Total variable costs per person	$107.10

STEP 3: Using the information from your fixed and variable costs, determine how many people you think will attend so you can establish a break-even point.

Establishing Your Break-even Costs

1.	Take your fixed costs and divide by the number guaranteed to break even. $16,308.60 divided by fifty people = total per person for fixed costs.	$326.17
2.	Add the total per person variable cost	107.10
	Subtotal cost for each registrant	$433.27

Since you plan to offer conference participants the option of charging their registration fee to a credit card, it is necessary at this time to add 2.5 percent, or $10.83, to the total cost for each registrant, $433.27. Thus, the total cost per person is $444.10.

STEP 4: Establish your registration fee so that it is equal to or exceeds your total cost for each registrant.

The logical registration fee would be $445.00 per person.

STEP 5: Now that you have distinguished between fixed and variable costs and established a registration fee, display this data so the internal logic of how you arrived at your registration fee is clear.

Again the following budget form works well for any non-credit continuing education program.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign Account no **125**
Office of Continuing Education and Public Service
Division of Conferences and Institutes Activity ID **893**

Submitted by **Robert Simerly** Preparation date **Jan. 15**
Title **National Symposium on the Financing of Continuing Education**
Date(s) **November 3-7** Location **Illini Union**
Faculty coordinator **Charles Kozoll**
Address **118 Illini Hall** Phone **333-2074**
Per Person Registration Fee Breakdown:
Fixed fee per person **326.17** Variable fee per person **107.10** Total **433.26**
Total **$444.10** with credit card service fee
Registration Fee **$445**
Break-even attendance **50**
PAYROLL/TRAVEL

List University of Illinois personnel first and add ______ % fringe benefits.

Instructors	Travel	Per diem	Honorarium	Other	Date paid
James Wilson	**450**	**200**	**600**		
Mary Conway	**450**	**200**	**600**		
Leslie Smithers	**450**	**200**	**400**		
Warren Westbrook	**450**	**200**	**400**		
Sally Seivers	**450**	**200**	**400**		
Totals	**2,250**	**1,000**	**2,400**		**5,650**

Approved ______________ Date ______________ C & I Business Manager
Approved ______________ Date ______________ C & I Director
Approved ______________ Date ______________ OCEPS Representative

Copies to:

Master File Business Manager Coordinator Secretary

Account no. 125 Title National Symposium on Financing Continuing Education

FIXED COSTS	
Total from page 1	5,650
Administrative travel	300
In-house fee	2,000
Bus tours	
Entertainment	300
Photography	125
Planning committee	50
Equipment rental	200
Equipment moving	175
Physical plant	
General duplicating	345
Publicity	450
Complimentary expenses	821
Graphic design	500
Typesetting	
List purchase	355
Advertising	
Printing	2,040
17,000 @ 12¢ each	
Mailing/Postage	1,515
Other	
Subtotal	14,826

Fixed Cost Summary

14,826.00 Subtotal fixed costs
1,482.60 Add 10 % Miscellaneous
16,308.60 Total fixed costs
divided by 50 people
to break even
326.17 Total fixed cost per person

PER PERSON VARIABLE COSTS	
Registration pack	5.00
Notebook	
Paper/pencils	
Per person duplicating	
2 Lunches @ 10.00	20.00
5 Coffee breaks @ 1.25	6.25
2 Dinners @ 19.00	38.00
Total food = 64.25	12.85
5% tax + 15% gratuity	
of $64.25.	
*Complimentary registrations	
figure at $82.10 subtotal	
Per person return to committee	25.00
Total	107.10

Registration Fee

326.17 Per person fixed costs
107.10 Per person variable costs
433.27 Subtotal
10.83 If using VISA/ MASTER CHARGE add 2.5 % of Subtotal
444.10 Total costs per person
445.00 Registration fee
50 People to break even

Remarks:
The costs for complimentary registrations only include your actual dollar expenditures for food and the registration packet. These total $82.10 each. Complimentary registrations do not have $25 per person returned to the committee. Therefore ten complimentary registrations are 10 x $82.10 = $821 total.

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT PLANNING SUCCESSFUL BUDGETS FOR NONCREDIT CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Question: How do you determine the number of people you can expect for a conference or workshop so you can establish a minimum number to break even?

Response: There are no foolproof formulas for this. However, the following are guidelines that you can adapt to your individual situation.

1. Using informed opinion, estimate how many people you think will attend. Then cut this in half for the number of registrants needed to break even.

2. If the program has a prior history, gather together data on the number of registrants for the last five years. Average these figures and reduce the average by one half to establish a reasonably safe break-even point.

3. If you are using direct mail brochures as your primary means of securing registrations, use the following figures that professional program planners have generally found to be reliable:

   a. If the market you want to reach is national or regional market (for example, in the Case Study 2 you would want to reach all deans and directors of continuing education in the United States), count on two to four registrants for every 1,000 brochures mailed.

   b. If the market you want to reach is a state-wide market, count on four to eight registrants for every 1,000 brochures mailed.

c. If your program is aimed at a very specific local market that is easy to identify, count on two to four registrants for every 100 brochures mailed. However, if your program is general and your market is local, it will usually take 1,000 brochures mailed to produce two to four registrants.

4. With a new program it is a good policy to never exceed fifty people to break even, unless a cosponsor will guarantee your losses if the registration falls below that number. If you do not have enough data in your organization to show that this figure of fifty is reliable, use twenty-five to thirty people as a break-even figure for a new program.

Question: Most of the people I plan programs for want me to present them for about half of what it really costs to do a top quality program. They get angry when I take a hard line regarding the break-even point. What can I do?

Response: Managing the conflict regarding the process of planning and administering the budget is a major part of your job. The conflict is natural, inevitable, and plans should be made for managing it effectively. One good way to reduce hard feelings on the part of planning groups you work with is to ask them to share the risks as well as the profits. People who agree will quickly see the wisdom of establishing realistic break-even points. You are actually educating people about the reality of costs associated with quality programs.

In the case study, for example, you could establish a break-even number at 100 rather than fifty people (with a total break-even cost of $270.18 per person without using credit cards), if a cosponsoring group would agree to cover all losses for actual registrations under 100 people.*

*This figure is calculated as follows: Total fixed cost = $16,308.00 divided by 100 people = $163.08 fixed costs per person plus $107.10 per person variable costs = $270.18 break-even costs per person.

Question: Are you suggesting alternatives should be offered when planning budgets?

Response: Exactly. We all like to choose from alternatives instead of having someone plan a budget for us and remain inflexible about its parts. Weighing the pros and cons of alternatives is a way to help your clients develp a strong psychological commitment to the program. Such discussion also tends to produce better decisions for both budgets and programs--decisions that improve the program quality.

Question: Yes, but they still tell me that my registration fees are too high. What else can I do?

Response: Then you will have to create some data to aid you and the people you are working with in the decision making. Maybe they are right. Maybe they are not. No one knows for sure at this point. The real issue is how much will people be willing to pay to participate in the program? For example, a way to do this in Case Study 2 would be to:

a. Suggest to the group that you are working from incomplete data about what people will pay to attend the proposed program.

b. Suggest that you and the group take a list of deans and directors of continuing education and call ten people at random. Explain the program to these people and ask if they would consider attending and how much they would be willing to pay. (Note: Keep this question open-ended and let them suggest a figure. Do not say, "Would $395.00 be too much for you to pay to attend?" Questions worded this way almost always produce the response, "Yes, that's too much.")

c. When you use this approach to research the market for your program, it is useful if the group you are working with can do half of the calling. This creates believable data; it also helps to educate your group that there is more to good program development than making sure that the coffee is delivered on time. Using this process, which can be completed in less than five to ten minutes per call, you not only get valuable data about price but also about the overall design of the program. You may, for example, find that no one wants to come at *any* price. Better to know this before you have invested several thousand dollars in your direct mail advertising.

Such telephone calls to a random list of potential participants are the fastest, easiest, least expensive, and most reliable way to gather data about the content of a proposed program, as well as about the registration fee participants will be willing to pay.

GUIDELINES FOR AVOIDING THE TEN MOST COMMON MISTAKES MADE WHEN PLANNING BUDGETS FOR NONCREDIT CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

1. Plan for hidden program costs.

All programs have hidden or additional costs that develop between the time the brochure has been printed and the time when the program takes place. Often these additional costs will occur because someone has an idea on how to improve the program. Thus by increasing quality you also increase expenses. To plan for these additional costs, *alway take the subtotal of your fixed costs and add at least 10 percent to this figure for miscellaneous expenses before establishing the total fixed costs.*

2. Take into account what inflation can do to all program costs.

Today's high rate of inflation hits every area of our economy. Six months from now you can expect to pay more for groceries at the supermarket.

If you plan a noncredit program that will be held six months from now, you must plan for inflation. Items that are affected most often by inflation are food, airline travel, mailing charges, and paper supplies. *Do not use today's rates for planning expenses more than three months in advance unless you have a guarantee in writing that the same item or service will be guaranteed at that rate when your program is held.*

3. Figure adequate costs for utilizing mailing services to do your bulk mailings.

The actual cost of postage is usually only a small part of the actual cost to mail large quantities of brochures. For example, the bulk mailing rate may be 3.7 cents per item. However, unless you wish to label and sort 20,000 brochures for a large mailing, you must pay a mailing service to do this for you. For example, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign we find that it costs us about 12 cents per brochure for a bulk mailing. Postage is only 3.7 cents of this cost. The remainder is the cost charged by our mailing center for labor and supplies to handle a large bulk mailing. *Check with your local mailing service to determine your total cost per item for a bulk mailing.* Incidentally, trying to label your own brochures for mailings of over 1,000 items may be a false economy. Time is a valuable commodity for you and your staff. *Don't underestimate its value.*

4. Get in writing what the managers of facilities will provide for exactly what price.

Failure to get a written account of what your facility manager will provide and at what price can wreck a budget and cause you to lose money. For example, a conference planner recently told me about running a program at a large hotel in a major convention city. He was used to dealing with smaller facilities so he assumed that the hotel would provide its usual sound system. Not so. The convention hotel had a contract with the electrician's union and the conference was on a weekend. According to the terms of the contract not only did the sound equipment get charged as an expense, but the union contract also required an electrician to be on site for the entire weekend at the weekend union rate of time and a half.

What began as an assumption on the part of the program planner ended up costing an unanticipated extra $1,500.00! Moral? *Get everything in writing before you establish your registration fee!*

5. Include complimentary expenses as part of the fixed costs in the budget.

Almost all programs will have some complimentary registrants. *It is important to remember that there are always expenses associated with complimentary registrations and these must be planned for as part of the fixed costs in a budget. If your complimentary guests eat all meals, participate in coffee breaks, and receive a registration packet, someone pays for this. Complimentary expenses always cost you real dollars.*

Plan for complimentary expenses as part of the fixed costs of your budget. For example, in Case Study 2 you incur $82.10 in actual expenses for each of the ten complimentary registrations. The real cost for these complimentary registrations is $821!

6. Include appropriate charges for tax and gratuity.

States, as well as conference facilities, vary on the rate they charge for tax and gratuity. In addition, they vary on how they exempt nonprofit organizations from such tax and gratuity charges. Even though you are a nonprofit organization, you may still have to pay the full tax on hotel services in some states. In addition, most conference facilities automatically charge a minimum of 15 percent to all food bills for gratuity, and at some places this gratuity percentage is as high as 25 percent.

Again, the rule of getting it in writing should be observed.

7. Keep an accurate running account of all income and expenses

This is particularly important because as you proceed with program plans, they will continually need to be modified and revised to meet the unique demands of each individual program. In order to respond to these revisions, *it is imperative to create a way to maintain an accurate, daily record of all program income and expenses.* In this way, you can respond effectively to each request for last-minute additions or changes to the budget, and at the same time maintain control over all expenditures so that the budget is not overspent.

8. Recognize that managing any human conflict that occurs in the budgetary process is important.

The conflict produced during program planning and implementation is often very apparent with budgetary issues. The budget is the most concrete aspect of any program and becomes the most natural focal point for conflict and criticism.

It is important to remember that conflict over a budgetary item often has a basis in something else. *This "something else," or the "hidden agenda," must be addressed if the conflict is to be managed to the satisfaction of all parties, one where a win-win situation is produced.* In other words, the real basis of the conflict must be understood and dealt with before successful conflict management can take place. Often it is the reality that many people do not have a good idea of what a quality program costs.

9. Establish the necessary checks and balances to control expenditures.

Program planners sometimes fail to establish who has the authority to commit expenditures for the program, particularly when they are working with large planning committees. The result can be that a number of people will begin spending money--each certain that he or she is making the best possible decisions and speeding along the entire program planning process. This is the easiest and fastest way to overspend your budget, wind up in the hole, and create hard feelings for everyone involved. *Therefore, clearly establish at the beginning that you and you alone, as the official program administrator, are in charge of managing any budget.*

Make sure everyone understands you are the only one who can incur an expense. Don't wait until a problem develops to establish this authority over the budget. Incidentally, most people will be delighted to have you do this.

10. Plan for the format of your budget wrap-up at the end of the program before you incur your first expense or receive your first income.

All programs need a budget wrap-up after they are completed. In terms of accounting this is referred to as "stewardship accounting;" that is, you as the program director in charge of a budget need to show that you spent the money the way you planned in the project budget.

If you have not decided how you will present the data in your budget wrap-up, it is impossible to design a good accounting system that will provide this data. Therefore, be sure to decide before you incur any expenses or receive any income, what records, along with receipts and other documentation for income and expenses, you will need. From the time you receive your first income or incur your first expense, you are the steward of the funds--thus the term "stewardship accounting." You will be asked to account for everything according to the budget you have prepared.

CHECKLIST FOR BUDGET PREPARATION

The following checklist covers the major important budget areas with which most program planners must deal. Such a checklist, with the additions and revisions appropriate to your own situation, should be completed for each budget.

____ Estimate travel expenses for presenters as accurately as possible based on best available data. Take into account the rise in prices between the time you prepare the budget and the time you actually pay for the expense.

____ Include fringe benefits, social security, or other appropriate expenses in the total expenses for presenters.

____ Build in an appropriate administrative fee to recover your salary and office expenses if your program needs to be fully or partially self-supporting.

____ Include *all* expenses associated with direct mailing of brochures including mailing service charges.

____ Include graphic design and typesetting expenses appropriate for brochures.

____ Secure a *written* bid from your printer that guarantees the price. Specify that you want the exact number of brochures you order. Get the cost and the guaranteed delivery date in writing.

____ Include expenses for additional publicity--such as advertisements in journals or news releases to radio and television stations, newspapers, and professional societies.

____ If you evaluate the conference, include expenses for machine or hand scoring of evaluation results.

____ Decide on your audiovisual requirements and include these expenses. (Note: Be sure to find out whether or not your conference facility charges for a sound system, if you need one.)

____ Get accurate estimates for all food, including coffee breaks.

____ Add to all food expenses the appropriate percentage for tax and gratuity.

____ Include duplicating costs for duplicating all handouts such as program handouts, rosters, nametags, directories, etc.

____ If you allow registrants to charge their registration to a credit card, be sure to add to your total costs the percentage you must pay the bank for using the credit card.

____ Plan to treat complimentary registrations as real, fixed-cost items. Complimentary registrations will cost you real dollars — usually for meals, registration packets, tours, and handouts.

____ Have at least two people not involved in the preparation of the budget check it for accuracy.

READINGS IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT • NO 6

THE CONFERENCE COORDINATOR AS A CONTINUING EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL

CAROL D. HOLDEN
University of Illinois

OFFICE OF CONTINUING EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

READINGS IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT • NO.6

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The title, conference coordinator, brings to mind many images. For some this image is one of a person who largely operates behind-the-scenes and is neither seen nor heard. This image fits when coordinators limit their activities to arranging the physical aspects of a meeting and do not participate in program development. To others the title, conference coordinator, suggests a stronger image—one with more involvement in the programmatic aspects of the conference. The many terms which are vaguely descriptive and in current use create conflicting images. Program director, meeting planner, conference consultant, as well as conference coordinator—there is confusion about the distinctions, if any, between these roles. Through the use of illustrative examples and the specification of skills, I will try to clarify the image of the professional conference coordinator who is employed by a continuing education division of a university or college or by a professional association.

ATTITUDES

A conference coordinator in continuing education should possess certain attitudes to be truly professional. The professional person needs to be concerned with the development of *high quality* continuing education programs as a first priority. This is different from being primarily concerned with the production of many programs for the sake of making a profit. Occasionally, the conference coordinator will have clients who have a preconceived conference plan. They just want space arranged for them in a university building and perhaps a brochure printed. Generally resist programs in which there is no involvement of the coordinator in the planning and development of the initial ideas because the most important facet of conference planning is the program development phase. When a coordinator is unable to convince or persuade clients of the benefits of this service, it is better in the long run to postpone working with that client until some future time when full conference services can be offered.

Example 1: As a concrete example of this experience, I once worked with a client on the basis of arranging things and doing absolutely everything as requested. Our office had virtually no input on the budget, printing, speaker selection, or site selection. The client was a faculty member and should have been dissuaded from making all these decisions without help. We should have declined to be involved when it became clear that we had no share in the decision making. So many things went wrong I can't even list them.

After all that happened, our office was lucky to recover expenses. Now because of more experience and a more professional attitude, I would never agree to work with a client on the above basis because it is a no-win situation. If things don't turn out well, we stand to lose our good reputation with our clients and if they do turn out well, we aren't responsible in any way. In short, you need a firm sense of commitment to a partnership—client and coordinator—when engaging in program development.

Example 2: In contrast with the first example I will describe another situation in which there was positive involvement from the beginning in all aspects of developing the conference. The client contacted our office when first thinking of planning a conference. I was there when the brainstorming took place for topics and speakers. The client was receptive to the idea of a telephone survey to get a "feel" for the needs of the target audience, as well as for the probable financial success of the program.

I was responsible for all speaker honoraria negotiations and for defining specific contributions for each speaker. As a result I was able to maintain close control of the budget and arrange maximum speaker involvement in the total program. The best possible outcome is to have speakers who are very interested in the success of the program and will work hard to make a significant contribution. It is far better to have speakers excited about your program and really eager to participate than to have speakers who feel it is your privilege to see them for a short time and pay them large honoraria for brief presentations. I feel that many clients are not comfortable with this process and a professional coordinator should help with the speaker negotiation process.

One further point needs to be made on the subject of program development. The coordinator and the client need to have an "open line." They need to talk frequently and discuss the various aspects of the conference. It is the partnership which helps to ensure a high quality program.

The professional person needs to be interested in all details and aspects of the program, whether or not certain tasks are delegated to others. Often, others will work harder and more creatively if the planner is sincerely interested in the work and shows this interest from time to time.

Example: Hotels very often give better service if interest is expressed about how they plan to provide the services needed. I have been using a local hotel to provide "theme" dinners for several groups throughout the year. I found that this hotel responded to the challenge very eagerly and prepared extravagant menus for a Middle Eastern dinner, a Cuban dinner, and a Slavic banquet. In each case the price was very little higher than one might expect to pay for a very ordinary, if not dreary, hotel conference banquet. The staff pulled out all the stops and seemed to be grateful for the opportunity to provide something unusual.

All during the planning, I interact closely with hotel personnel (chef, banquet manager, and sales manager) so there is no way the hotel can misunderstand my interest. This same level of interest and enthusiasm will help get better results from nearly everyone concerned. The time it takes to interact with the others on your team and with others outside your organization who are important to the outcome of your program is time very well spent.

The professional coordinator must have a positive attitude toward the goals of adult continuing education. Continuing education is now experiencing rapid growth and there is the risk that some programs may be offered because "anything will sell." Avoid fads in continuing education and be sure to develop a sound educational basis for the courses and programs offered. One must avoid cynicism and hucksterism in this field.

Example: For awhile, anyone and everyone in continuing education offered "women's" programs. Some of these were well planned , excellent programs. Unfortunately, a great many were not. Consequently the women's programs are now somewhat under a cloud and are not doing well. Other programs that may initially have been popular are still successful because there is a sound educational basis for them.

An example of this is our Alumni College. Not all those who rushed into this field have continued to have successful programs. We have worked hard to keep the educational quality of the program high. We always conduct surveys with the alumni to help in the program planning and pricing. We have not experienced a decline in this program; in fact, it is one of the "showcase" programs we offer, both in educational quality and in popularity ratings. We try very hard to make each year's Alumni College unique in some ways. It is the tailor-made quality that gives the participants a great deal of satisfaction. You will do more to enhance your reputation and that of your organization by planning quality continuing education programs than by delivering production-line or "band-wagon" type programs.

APTITUDES

The professional conference coordinator needs to possess certain aptitudes or talents—certain personality characteristics or natural abilities. Most of these traits may be learned or acquired, but it is possible that some people might not be as well suited as others for the conference coordinator's position.

The professional coordinator needs to be creative and to possess a certain flair. Imagination is necessary all along the way in conference planning and in the administration of on-site arrangements. Imagination provides images and visions of a conference while it is still in the planning stage. The literal-minded person may be unable to imaginatively transform a lobby or an exhibit area into a grand, elegant reception area. The unimaginative person has trouble entertaining unusual ideas and generally prefers to avoid the special effects that may make the difference between a routine meeting and one that is remembered for years to come.

Example 1: A good illustration of the use of imagination is a conference which is in the planning stages now. It is to be an international congress and will be held for the first time in the United States. The suggestion was made that some of the overseas visitors would like a Wild West show. While this may sound silly on the face of it, it was a take-off point for my imagination. Clearly, America is still perceived as a frontier by many people. It would not be too difficult to transform a stock pavilion into a show-ring and to utilize a student club in the College of Agriculture to provide "cowboys." With a large tent outside for a Texas-style barbecue, souvenir cowboy hats, and appropriate music, we could set the mood and do an impression of a Wild, Wild West show. It is these imaginative touches that your participants will remember and will make the conference an extravaganza instead of a big, impersonal congress. The planners are now caught up in the idea and we are all working together to create a very special evening for this conference.

The person who wishes to be a professional conference coordinator must be able to sustain personal interest and enthusiasm over the whole life-cycle of a conference. This person is a key element in the total success of the program and how everyone feels about the program may hinge in part on this level of commitment and enthusiasm.

Example 2: Last summer we hosted the annual meeting for a large national association. The program was complex, involving a professional program, a spouse's program, a teen's program, and a young children's program. In addition, there were pre- and post-conference tours and a program for graduate students. We had to plan for simultaneous banquets, university reunions (social occasions), commercial exhibits, and a large gala reception on the opening night. We coordinated the lodging and meals in the university dormitories with the housing division and arranged for meeting space around the campus. In short, this was a "mega-conference," and it would have been tempting to delegate responsibility to the many faculty subcommittees and not keep up a high level of interest in all the facets of the program. I believe this temptation should be resisted because when the client and the participants perceive your interest and your level of enthusiasm, they feel much more confident that the program will be a success. Further, I feel it is important to personally attend the program and, if many things are happening at the same time, it is important to "make the rounds." I received many positive comments from the organizers who appreciated the fact that I actually attended so many sessions and events. People remember the personal touch long after the program is over.

The successful coordinator needs to be an entrepreneur. The person must have good business sense and the ability to arouse enthusiasm and support for programs. While the image of a salesman or a businessman may not be entirely appropriate, there are some elements of both of these professions that relate to that of the conference coordinator. One must be able to sell ideas, program content, program site selection, and program marketing. One must be able to think about budgets, profits and losses, and keep in mind the overall financing of the progam. One needs to think about creatively financing many continuing education programs, including various innovative methods of paying speakers and faculty. Clearly, working with hotels demands the knack for negotiating prices.

When working with a limited budget it is important to negotiate the best prices with hotels. By visiting with the hotel sales manager about the problems of planning conferences with limited budgets, one can often persuade them to understand the situation and voluntarily offer solutions. If the situation is one in which several hotels will be bidding for conference business, they will be eager to help the coordinator work within the budget.

Example 3: I wanted to find a reasonable rate for an education group in a popular resort area in the winter. By planning two conferences back to back—one for January 4-6 and the next for January 8-10—I was able to get extremely attractive rates from the hotel. The hotel benefited by filling up a large block of space for a "shoulder time" just after January first, and I benefited by planning two conferences and getting good rates for both of them.

The professional must be able to take some risks. Not every conference outcome can be predicted, even with the best marketing research data. Those whose personality is not well suited for a high degree of ambiguity and risk-taking will probably not be successful or at least will not be entirely comfortable with the job. There are various risk elements present in conferences whether it is a one-time venture or whether it is a repeating program. The professional tries to minimize risk for the client and for the continuing education office.

Example 4: A recent conference was somewhat at risk financially. I determined that it was necessary to keep the fixed costs down in order to keep the registration fee from being too high. One factor in fixed costs is the high cost of speaker honoraria, especially when nine or ten speakers are involved. I thought of a plan to involve the speakers, as well as our office and the cosponsoring department, in the risk element. I devised a "sliding-scale" honoraria which basically meant that the speakers would receive a base fee with increments as our registrations increased; thus, we all stood to gain together. I increased the honoraria by $100 for every fifteen participants who registered (and actually attended). This added an element of suspense to the enterprise and only one person out of twelve whom I contacted to speak was not pleased with the arrangement and declined to participate.

One must have a sense of humor and a sense of balance. The ability to take things in stride and keep a good perspective on the totality of the efforts is invaluable for a conference coordinator. Sometimes things go wrong in spite of the best efforts and systematic checks. When this happens the healthiest response may be to learn from the experience and realize the many things that could go wrong, but usually don't. While sloppiness is not advocated, everyone makes mistakes. It is much easier on the collective psyche of the organization if check points and some "safety time" are built in to prevent to mistakes.

To summarize, it is important to stress that many people have the necessary qualifications for a conference coordinator. But to be a really professional person and to plan and administer programs that are excellent in every way, one must be imaginative. Only those who can project an image and then carry it out in reality can hope to reach this level.

ROLES

The professional conference coordinator must be able to assume a number of very different roles, each with a degree of expertise, and also move with ease between these various roles. At times, the coordinator must assume several roles at once. This takes a very flexible and creative person.

The primary role for a professional conference coordinator is that of program planner or developer. The initial conceptualizing of a program idea with a client and the subsequent activities necessary to test the concept with the targeted audience is very crucial to the success of any program. This role involves the professional in planning needs assessments, market surveys, mailing list analysis, and content selection, as well as in the search for excellent speakers and presenters.

Example 1: I have managed a conference for teachers in universities and colleges in a particular discipline for three years. The first year I merely reacted to the planning committee without actively contributing to the process of content and speaker selection or program format. I basically assumed a passive role in the program development stage. However, I did write a rather extensive evaluation for the program. Based on that data I was much more active in the program planning for the next year. I was able to convince the planning committee of the wisdom of a marketing survey which gave us a data base for moving the conference location to another state and to another time of year. I assumed full responsibility for interviewing potential presenters and worked with them to obtain their maximum participation and involvement for the ultimate benefit of the conference participants. This change in role from a passive to an active planner was the key element in the program's greater success the second year.

The negotiating role is vital for a professional conference coordinator. Almost every day some aspect of negotiation will arise. (The term is used in a positive sense here.) A professional coordinator will negotiate terms and contracts with hotels, printers, speakers and presenters, and with others on the continuing education team to be sure that the conference has the best possible chance for success.

Hotels expect the coordinator who books meeting space with them to negotiate terms. Those who are less than skilled in negotiation may receive second-rate treatment and will possibly pay more for it. Let the hotel know the budget and what is expected for it and negotiate a total package rather than every single item.

Example 2: An interesting negotiating technique to use with hotels involves negotiating a total package of services, rather than pricing each service item. Recently I negotiated a total package with a hotel in a resort area at a popular time of year to very good advantage. I began the negotiating process by sharing with the hotel banquet manager my total needs and expectations. I also shared my concern over our limited budget. I asked the manager to work with the hotel team to see what could be arranged for us, given our spending limitations and our desires. I was pleased to receive as good or better services for $5.00 per person less than I expected to pay. I have not had a hotel refuse to work with me on this basis and I have had consistently better bids and better quality food and service on package arrangements. This allows the hotel some measure of freedom to allocate their resources in the best possible manner for your group. The key concept to remember is: hotels will work out prices, menus, and special arrangements if you negotiate your budget and needs from the beginning. Hotels have even surprised me by providing special floral arrangements and fancy carved ice figures when this was not specified. When you are negotiating, remember you have more than just prices to negotiate. You can offer a share in a very special and creative enterprise to those who are working with you and this is more rewarding than you can imagine.

The budget manager role is also very crucial to the success of a conference. Building the budget from the beginning and then monitoring it continually to make sure the conference is on sound financial footing is a role that is often underemphasized. Building the budget is the first step in the budget management process. The professional coordinator should monitor the budget weekly or daily to determine whether or not the budgeted amounts have been exceeded.

Example 3: Recently I worked with a university department to plan and administer a large annual meeting of a national association. I thought I was in control of the budget and that all faculty committee chairpersons were to clear their expenditures with me. Much to my surprise, several persons were making budget decisions and spending money without my knowledge or approval. If I had not been monitoring the budget I might not have discovered this situation until it was too late to save the program from overspending the total budget.

Example 4: It is also necessary to monitor the income for the conference. A professional coordinator should monitor the income by following the daily registrations and determining each day how many more participants are needed to reach the break-even point. I am now monitoring the registrations for our Alumni College. I know that at ten weeks prior to the start of the program I need twenty-three more participants to break even. When I look at the registration patterns of the past several years, I am able to project that I will exceed the break-even point by at least ten registrations. Close monitoring of the budget is not a negative process. I have a good feeling of positive control when I find that my expenditures are not exceeding the budgeted amounts. The best professional coordinators are experts at managing budgets.

A professional conference coordinator must also function as a marketing expert. The most wonderful program in the world will not be successful until it is marketed to a targeted audience. Advertising and direct-mail marketing are two major means of reaching a specific audience. Advertising in continuing education has been greatly overlooked as one tends to think of advertising as being primarily associated with "business" and not with education. Continuing education is big business and to market it well takes skill and practice. A professional coordinator needs to be actively involved in the production of the promotional or advertising copy and with the selection of targeted-audience mailing lists. Since the production of the brochure (or other printed copy), the purchase of mailing lists, postage, and the advertisements in journals or other media may account for up to thirty-five percent of your budget, it is extremely important to be competent in this role.

Example 5: It is a mistake to always use the same marketing technique. For a recent conference we used letters of invitation written on the department letterhead and mailed first class. These letters were sent to all those who answered our advertisements or made a telephone or written inquiry. We found a high rate of response to these letters, much higher than one would expect. For the targeted audience at large, we used a standard brochure.

Example 6: Sometimes it is tempting to place advertisements in the large journals of the profession, which are usually very expensive. I have found that it is better to conduct a marketing survey first to determine which journal or periodical most of the audience reads regularly before making the decision to place an advertisement. I saved over $220.00 because I found most of my potential participants did not read the major journal of the association, but, rather, they read the journal of a division within a large organization. A full page advertisement in this second journal was less expensive than a very small ad in the large publication.

Example 7: If you purchase lists, be sure to code them (the list house or association will do this for you) so that you can research how the list attracted participants after the conference is over. The worst error I ever made in marketing was to purchase several expensive lists and then fail to save the labels for analysis. We cut them off and threw them away when we received the registrations!

The professional conference coordinator must be concerned with on-site management of the conference. This work may be shared with the conference team, but the professional is always interested in the actual implementation of the conference. This includes the on-site registration of participants, room set-ups, supplying needed audiovisual aids, tender loving care of speakers and presenters, arrangements for coffee breaks and special meals, providing social hours and informal time, overseeing tours or special events, and providing auxiliary programs for spouses and/or children. The on-site phase of the conference is the part participants or clients will remember. This is what will be associated with the university, college, or association. All the good planning and publicity will count for nothing if the on-site management is less than adequate. The coordinator's concern and management skills are essential at this point.

Example 8: At a recent conference with some thirty-five panels of presenters (each with four to five panelists), there were last minute requests. Those panelists who needed extra audiovisual aids or extra copies of a paper were reassured in a very friendly manner that the requests would be honored as soon as possible. Even requests that were beyond the call of duty needed to be answered in a professional way. At the last minute, one particular presenter wanted to show a 16 mm film and needed a special room and projector. Even though it took some time to find a way to serve his needs, he was very grateful; he looked good because we handled the situation in a professional manner.

The professional conference coordinator must function as an evaluator for ongoing programs, as well as for one-time programs. If an evaluation specialist is employed, the coordinator must work with that person to design appropriate evaluation forms and/or strategies for the particular conference. It is risky to succumb to the temptation to use the "same old form" just because it is handy. Waiting until the last minute to write evaluations is a pitfall to be avoided. Learn to write good open-ended questions and how to analyze data once it has been gathered. An Op-scan form can be used for most evaluations because of the ease of scoring. On this form there is plenty of room for a number of open-ended questions. Write new questions for each conference, even though a pool of questions may be used as a source. While many of the evaluations used are similar, each one is tailor-made for a specific conference.

Example 9: I have an ongoing professional certification program for municipal employees. The program content is my responsibility, yet it must have approval from the national association for certification. I found it difficult to evaluate with the usual instrument that asked for speaker ratings and topic usefulness. The group seemed split with no clear direction. I decided to try several methods of collecting data, some objective and some subjective. Using a graduate student to help, we collected data from individual interviews, small group interviews, group observations, and the usual evaluation form asking for information on each topic and speaker. The informal approach really helped clarify some areas where the group seemed divided or where there was no clear consensus. With this multi-pronged approach, I was able to support my decisions on topics and speakers with more confidence.

COMPETENCIES OR SKILLS NEEDED

To carry out the many roles described in the previous sections, the professional conference coordinator must have sufficient skills in a number of areas. These skills may be sharpened through professional development while the coordinator is working, but most should have been acquired before assuming the position.

- The professional needs skills in planning a needs assessment. The several ways to carry out this task should be familiar to the coordinator and the methods of data analysis must be understood. This means that the professional conference coordinator must have a basic understanding of computer technology and simple statistics.
- The professsional needs a working knowledge of group dynamics to function well when working with planning committees. How and when to assume certain leadership roles is essential in getting committees to develop an effective action plan.
- The professional must be able to make decisions that affect the outcome of the conference, whether those decisions are regarding the finances, the program content, or the site selection. The most crucial decision that must be made is whether or not to hold the conference in the first place.
- The professional coordinator must have a working understanding of budgets. Building a realistic budget at the beginning of the planning stages is perhaps *the most important facet* of the job.
- The professional conference coordinator must be able to handle many details and balance the several roles of the position. When managing a conference on-site, the professional must attend to a

number of details and aspects of the conference simultaneously. For some people, this is a frustrating aspect of conference work. For others, this is challenging and exciting.

- The professional must have excellent human relations skills. A conference coordinator works with people and markets the programs to people. Coordinators deficient in this area will surely be less happy and probably less successful than those with good skills in human relations.

- The professional must have some broad knowledge of academic disciplines. To work well with planning content, the professional conference coordinator needs to know whether these programs are educationally sound or not. It is much easier to work as an equal and with confidence if there has been some academic preparation for this role.

- The professional will be motivated to upgrade and improve his or her own skills periodically. In a field that is growing as rapidly as adult continuing education, professionals should acquire new skills and take time for personal professional development. The coordinator who believes this is important will bring more enthusiasm and professional expertise to the organization.

- The professional coordinator will have excellent communication skills to work with planning groups, the individual participants in the programs, the vendors, the speakers, and the members of the organizational team. Good writing and speaking skills are very important in this job.

- Finally, a successful conference coordinator needs energy and an optimistic point of view. These traits are communicated to the clients and the participants and can make all the difference in the overall ambience of the programs.

REWARDS

The potential rewards for a professional conference coordinator are enormous. Each conference has a beginning planning phase, a middle development stage, and a conclusion; each phase is interesting in its own way. Analysis of the evaluation data for each program places the professional coordinator in an envious position of knowing with some measure of certainty the impact of the programs. This is very gratifying.

Another rewarding aspect of planning conferences is the direct involvement in the *total effort*. No professional conference coordinator should just arrange the coffee breaks, food functions, or meeting rooms. There is the opportunity to share in the very exciting phases of program development and marketing. Have some artistic input on the design of the advertising copy or brochure. It is often possible to plan some extra-special social events for the conference. Stay very active in the site selection. Sharing in the total enterprise is usually satisfying to most professionals.

In nearly every conference office there is a great variety of programs. The coordinator at a university works with academic departments and units involving nearly all the disciplines on campus. In addition, the coordinator works with outside professional and community groups and associations. The variety of content and topics makes life very interesting. Many different people work with the coordinator to plan and administer the conferences, and each conference is different. This requires flexibility, but it also offers a very stimulating and satisfying professional life. Few jobs allow opportunity for professional creativity and such pleasant rewards.

A CHECK LIST FOR CONFERENCE COORDINATORS

1. Do you get involved with program development for your conferences?

2. Do you take an active part in the budget building process?

3. Do you conduct needs assessments or do marketing surveys *before* new conferences?

4. Do you write new evaluations for each program? (This does not mean taking out an old stand-by form.)

5. Do you work with hotels or other vendors to get the best prices and services possible? Do you afford them the opportunity to be creative along with you to get the best results?

6. Do you work with speakers or presenters to get maximum benefit from their services and involve them actively in the successful outcome of the program?

7. Do you work with the other members of your organization as a team to accomplish goals that are enhancing to all of you and for which you can all take credit?

8. Do you have academic cosponsorship for the majority of your programs? (if your office is with a university or college, this should be important to you.)

9. Do you critique your programs with your team and the organizing committee (post-mortems) to better understand what happened and why?

10. Do you try to have a data base for important decisions?

11. Do you follow through on programs after they are scheduled?

12. Do you revise continuing programs?

13. Do you get repeat business?

14. Do clients make referrals to you based on their good experience with your office?

15. Do you remember to thank those that helped make your programs a success—your team, the speakers, the vendors, the organizing committee, or the sponsors or supporters?

16. Do you ever thank the participants for attending?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Holden is a conference coordinator in the Office of Conferences and Institutes in Continuing Education and Public Service at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Since 1978 she has been responsible for the planning, development, management, and budgeting of state, regional, national, and international conferences. She works with academic units and departments as well as with professional associations to plan continuing education programs for adults. In addition, she has academic interests in aesthetic education and is a consultant to arts education programs in Illinois and nationally. She is a co-author of *Historic Preservation Education.*

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